Collected
Essays and
Lectures

Romila Thapar

The Historian and Her Craft

•••

Social and Cultural Transactions

In conversation with
Rajan Gurukkal

The Historian and Her Craft

THE HISTORIAN AND HER CRAFT

Collected Essays and Lectures

Romila Thapar

Volume III: Social and Cultural Transactions

OXFORD
UNIVERSITY PRESS

Purchased:
Approval :
Gratis : 035864
Acc No .
Price .
"Narayan Rao Melgiri
National Law Library"
Bangalore

OXFORD
UNIVERSITY PRESS

Oxford University Press is a department of the University of Oxford.
It furthers the University's objective of excellence in research, scholarship,
and education by publishing worldwide. Oxford is a registered trademark of
Oxford University Press in the UK and in certain other countries.

Published in India by
Oxford University Press
2/11 Ground Floor, Ansari Road, Daryaganj, New Delhi 110 002, India

© Oxford University Press 2018

The moral rights of the authors have been asserted.

First Edition published in 2018

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, without the prior permission in writing of Oxford University Press, or as expressly permitted by law, by licence, or under terms agreed with the appropriate reprographics rights organization. Enquiries concerning reproduction outside the scope of the above should be sent to the Rights Department, Oxford University Press, at the address above.

You must not circulate this work in any other form
and you must impose this same condition on any acquirer.

ISBN-13: 978-0-19-946775-4
ISBN-10: 0-19-946775-7

Typeset in ScalaPro 10.5/14
by Tranistics Data Technologies, Kolkata 700 091
Printed in India by Replika Press Pvt. Ltd

Contents

List of Figures vii

List of Abbreviations ix

Introduction xi
Rajan Gurukkal

LOOKING AT EPICS
1. The Historian and the Epic 1
2. Some Aspects of the Economic Data in the *Mahābhārata* 17
3. *Dāna* and *Dakṣiṇā* as Forms of Exchange 33
4. The *Rāmāyaṇa*: Theme and Variation 47

THE HERO
5. Death and the Hero 79
6. As Long as the Moon and the Sun Endure 98

GENEALOGIES AND CLAIMS TO STATUS
7. Genealogical Patterns as Perceptions of the Past 109
8. Origin Myths and the Early Indian Historical Tradition 152
9. Clan, Caste and Origin Myths in Early India 179
10. The Mouse in the Ancestry 193

INDIA AND EUROPE IN EARLY TIMES
11. The Image of the Barbarian in Early India 202
12. Indian Views of Europe: Representations of the Yavanas in Early Indian History 237

13. Black Gold: South Asia and the Roman Maritime Trade 257
14. Time Concepts, Social Identities and Historical Consciousness in Early India 289

Romila Thapar *in Conversation with* Rajan Gurukkal 304
Index 319

Figures

5.1 Hero-Stone from Molcamem, *c.* 12th Century 91
5.2 Hero-Stone from Gatag-Batgeri (Dharwar Distt) 92
5.3 Hero-Stone from Holal (Bellary Distt), Karnataka 92
5.4 Hero-Stone from Damkhed (Gujarat), *c.* 12th Century 93
5.5 A Cluster of Hero-Stones at Bedsa (Maharashtra) 93
5.6 Hero Being Taken to Heaven by *Apsaras* from Kadabogere (Bellary Distt), Karnataka 94
5.7 Sati-stone from North Kerala 94

7.1 The *Vaṃśānucarita* Section of the *Purāṇa*: The Succession of Rulers (This is Not to a Time Scale) 114

Abbreviations

ABORI	*Annals of the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute*
APGMS	*Andhra Pradesh Government Museum Series*
BEFEO	*Bulletin de I'Ecole Francaise d'Extreme Orient*
BORI	*Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute*
CSSH	*Comparative Studies in Society and History*
Ep. Ind.	*Epigraphia Indica*
IHC	*Indian History Congress*
IHQ	*Indian Historical Quarterly*, Calcutta
JAOS	*Journal of the American Oriental Society*
JRAS	*Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*

Introduction

Rajan Gurukkal

This volume, *Social and Cultural Transactions*, contains fourteen essays pertaining to socio-economic and politico-cultural processes, relations, structures, institutions, ideas, and practices in early northern India. In fact, it is perhaps suitable enough to view them just as social commentaries because in Romila Thapar's work, aspects of collective human existence emerge as interconnected, with none being treated as an independent facet. The essays in this volume, drawn on uncommon themes occasioned either by academic invitations or by contemporary normative pressures, raise fundamental questions regarding the complex nature of socio-cultural relations and processes. Epics, myths, genealogies, death, heroism, ethnic representations, and historical consciousness emerge as the main themes, making the cultural aspect the predominant thread that runs through most of the essays. Other themes such as economy and forms of exchange can also be treated as studies in cultural transactions.

'Epic literature', Thapar says, 'emerges out of "heroic ages" and often retains the flavour of such an age in spite of repeated redactions of the text and the interpolation of later ages.' The epic is essentially a literary crystallization of the heroic ideal, composed at various points of time, giving it 'a compendium-like quality' not representative of any homogeneous society in a particular time and space. The epic is 'not to be taken as factual evidence' of specific events during a particular period. This makes the term 'epic age' a misnomer. The historian ought to know that the *Mahābhārata* took several centuries to evolve into its present state and that the *Rāmāyaṇa* has multiple versions belonging to disparate periods before seeking to historicize them in whole or part, or attempting to derive chronological information from them and characterizing the nature of societies reflected in these texts. Nevertheless, these issues are either ignored or forgotten by most historians who use the epics as a source material.

The epic literature, as Thapar has beautifully illustrated in several essays, is intrinsically a part of the oral tradition, composed, compiled, and collated over many centuries out of bardic fragments and enriched by subsequent interpolations. This is not to deny the use of epics in historical reconstruction but to inform the historian about the primacy of understanding the nature of epic composition. However, as Thapar maintains, the epic can be seen as the expression of a certain historical consciousness, even though the events which it describes may not be historically authenticated. A historian's endeavour in this context, according to Thapar, is to explore the historical function of the epic rather than to pursue its historicity. In her opinion, what is more relevant for the historian is to analyse the assumptions of the epic, which undoubtedly provide insights into past society and its people. But it is quite significant to note that the coexistence of uneven social formations has been a typical feature of the subcontinent, even up to the present, and hence what the epic signifies would be a milieu of multiple social formations. Naturally, how the epic appeals to each of these social formations would vary. What the epic as a compendium then offers to the historian is an assortment that has to be carefully sifted. In spite of all these limitations, historians have been attempting to historicize the events in the epics and provide a chronology for them, when even the core events described defy the possibility of dating.

'The Historian and the Epic' is a thorough and in-depth study, in which Thapar sets an example of what the textual analysis of the *Mahābhārata* means. Approving earlier scholars' classification of the text into layers of oral tradition and didactic postulates, she says that the first set seems to depict societies of agro-pastoral tribal chiefships based on cattle-lifting, gift, and redistribution, heading towards the transition to state society; the second set of layers that include didactic postulates depict a stratified society and the monarchical state. The two traditions are then exhaustively examined in the light of archaeological, anthropological, and historical implications. Anthropological readings unveil genealogies showing multiple lineage patterns, the problem of lineage disruption, incompatible marriage forms, conflicting kinship systems, and so on. The analysis of historical implications exposes anachronisms across the narrative and didactic sections. This meticulous analysis unravels an inexorably hidden social universe underlying the epic that ostensibly narrates the story of a conflict between collateral cousins over the question of succession. According to Thapar the epic presents the past in its own way, but without the developmental sequence and chronological order that we insist upon as fundamental to the logic of history.

In the essay on the economic data in the *Mahābhārata* (chapter 2 of this volume), there is a detailed analysis of the *rājasūya* sacrifice's gift-giving context, gift exchange, the associated game of dice, potlatch, items of potlatch, and forms of wealth consisting predominantly of gold, horses, elephants, slaves, and textiles. It examines the deeper historical implications of the presence and absence of the forms of wealth, differing definitions of wealth, the importance of livestock to the concept of wealth, and objects of gifts or tributes involving both forest goods as well as artefacts. The varying social formations, ranging between the hunting-gathering and agro-pastoral types, that these objects signify, the contrasting social habits they represent, the differing ritual practices that converge, and so on, are insightfully identified. Indicators are ascertained among the variety of objects pertaining to the nature of land ownership, the presence of independent cultivators, hired labourers, and slaves suggestive of the nature of social and power relations. Thapar discerns in the ensemble 'the gradual change from a pastoral-cum-agricultural economy to one more intensively dependent on land'. The growing importance of agriculture is clear in the later part of the text which mentions the introduction of tanks as a new item of gift. This becomes explicit in the section eulogizing the gifting of land as the best of all forms of gift-giving, indeed with traces of potlatch still prevalent. The inclusion of this in the didactic section implies the relatively recent emergence of the custom seeking 'strong moral and religious sanction'.

An essay embodies analyses of three major versions of the *Rāmāyaṇa* ('The *Rāmāyaṇa*: Theme and Variation', chapter 4 of this volume) story: first, the Buddhist version seen in the *Jātaka* literature, second, the Vālmīki *Rāmāyaṇa*, and third, the Jaina version in the *Paumacariyam* of Vimalasūri. The Rāma story, descending from some anterior oral tradition, survived as fragments in the *Jātaka* literature, and seems to have been organized and expanded into the Vālmīki *Rāmāyaṇa*. Thapar goes into the differences in the stories and shows how the *Dasaratha Jātaka* draws closer to the story in the epic despite the depiction of Sītā-devī as Rāma's sister and as his queen consort on completion of the exile. It contains traces of the origin myths of various ruling clans, especially the Śākyas and Koliyas. Referring to the theme of exile, which occurs in the *Jātaka* literature in a different manner, Thapar examines the *Sambula Jātaka* which contains the version closer to the one in the *Rāmāyaṇa*. In that, a prince exiles himself due to leprosy, and his wife, who accompanies him, gets kidnapped by a *rākkhasa* in the forest; but Śakra comes to her rescue and enables her to return to the prince. This version is distinguished from the one in the *Vessantara Jātaka*, which, in spite of the difference, is the most frequently cited in the context. Analysing the couple of other versions also found in the *Jātaka* literature, Thapar examines the problem of interpolations in the text as well as of sorting out the fragments which went into the making of the *Rāmāyaṇa*. The most problematic question then dealt with is the fixing of the geography of the exile episodes in the *Jātaka* literature and the epic. The chapter includes a discussion of the contrast between the kingdom and the forest.

Despite similarities in certain episodes, the Vālmīki *Rāmāyaṇa*, redacted for the propagation of Vaiṣṇavism, is significantly different from the Rāma story in the *Jātaka* literature. Similarly the Jaina version found in Vimalasūri's *Paumacariyam* was meant for the dissemination of Jaina didactics. Thapar argues that *Paumacariyam*, with all the main characters as pious Jainas, 'is a conscious and deliberate attempt at rewriting the existing version of the *Rāmāyaṇa* story'. It represents Ikṣvāku, Somavaṃśa, Vidyādhara, and Harivaṃśa as the best-known lineages. Rāvaṇa is shown as an ardent follower of Jainism and Jaina shrines. Most features show *Paumacariyam* as the mirror image of the Vālmīki *Rāmāyaṇa*. After the detailed comparison between the two texts, Thapar insightfully interprets the historical implications of every distinction. What the analytical comprehension of the three versions of the Rāma story unveils is the historical necessity of each as a form of validation for the changing historical context—the context of the dissolution of tribal oligarchies and chiefships into monarchies. It includes the interpretation that the Vālmīki *Rāmāyaṇa* is 'a charter of validation for the monarchical state' and a text of Vaiṣṇavite propagation.

Myths represent another baffling source material of early history, which mislead historians through their complex language of symbols and unconscious meanings and functions. So do genealogies. Sometimes the same origin myth occurs in association with a number of dynasties despite their disparate periods. Based on an extensive analysis of genealogical data claiming continuation of the line of ancient heroes to the later dynastic lists, a few essays in the volume show how difficult it is to use genealogies as a reliable source. Thapar explains genealogies and origin myths as perceptions of the past, a feature that historians have to be cognizant of, for many regard them as sources significant even in chronological reconstruction. She notes: 'In societies ... where the oral tradition rather than the use of literature is the more functional means of communication on a large scale, myths become one of the means of passing on information' (p. 154). Old myths are adapted to conform to the values and passions of new societies.

An instance well illustrated in the essay 'Origin Myths and Early Indian Historical Tradition' is that of the variation between the early and later versions of the myth in the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* and the *Purāṇas*, addressing two different purposes or new concerns. Thapar provides an analysis of a few selected myths in their relationships to the epics and *Purāṇas* to show their historical significance, not in terms of authenticity, but against the functional context of social validation. She discusses how each of the origin myths, seeking to explain not only the origin of the lineage but also its headquarters, plays a decisive role in the historical tradition by rendering a point of beginning. It further performs a fourfold function in the context, according to Thapar: 'to establish kinship links, to emphasize the legitimacy of succession, to indicate the migration of important groups and to provide social status to those who had acquired political power' (pp. 173–4).

In another essay, Thapar examines how in the Indian context, the transition from clan-based societies to the caste-based society of hierarchical stratification was a prerequisite for the formation of the state system, by looking at the genealogical section of early *Purāṇas* such as *Vāyu*, *Brahmāṇḍa*, *Matsya*, and *Viṣṇu*, composed around the fourth–fifth centuries AD. The author argues that this process of socio-political transformation was a slow one that needs deeper probing based on a variety of sources, including even oral tradition. According to Thapar, genealogies constitute the record of the transformation of clan-based societies into monarchies. They could be ways of representing society and hence read as records of social forms enabling better understanding of the past. Historians, who have been sceptical about the reliability of genealogies, are told that despite the mythological accounts in them, genealogical texts provide certain valuable social and political insights.

In two essays ('Death and the Hero' and 'As Long as the Moon and the Sun Endure', chapters 5 and 6 of this volume) the author traces the cult of local heroes back to past times when society was suffused with the ethics of the heroic age, which perpetuated the memory of heroes and their wives who opted to die, memorialized through hero stones and *sati* stones. What a hero stone means and how it acquires a distinctive status by means of the cult of the dead hero and turns that into the position, privilege, and power of the community are questions considered in detail. The entry of the hero to heaven through heroic death that permits a distinctive eschatology, the divinization of the dead, consecration of heroism through rites and rituals, and perpetuation of the heroic ideal until the sun and moon endure—these are the main sequences involved. All this helps restore to the community the hero's power sacrificed in death, as transformed into the distinctive privilege of being entitled to the claim of inheritance. Thapar says: 'The invention of the herostone, initially a commemorative memorial, can become the document of claims to higher social status' (p. 107). Her analysis shows that this practice applies to both folk as well as high culture. These essays remain excellent methodological illustrations of how insights from anthropology help in fruitful correlation of literary data with archaeological evidence.

A couple of essays are illustrative of how an interpretation of certain socio-ritual institutions that are ostensibly non-economic can unveil their discharge of vital economic functions like the circulation of wealth and services. Thapar observes, 'In the study of the society and economy of ancient India information has often to be ferreted out from seemingly unlikely sources. What is often associated with apparently non-economic activity such as religious rituals, can sometimes provide insights into social and economic concerns' (p. 33). The essay on *dāna* and *dakṣiṇā* (chapter 3) shows how donations and sacrificial fees facilitated the exchange of tangibles such as material wealth for intangibles such as status, religious merit, and legitimacy. Thapar goes into the meaning, functions, and historical implications of the *dāna-stuti*s of the *Ṛg Veda* and observes that apart from the magico-religious function, extensive gift-making in early societies meant conferring status by the donor and the donee on each other. For instance, *rājanya*s and *brāhmaṇa*s as gift-givers and recipients respectively derive their status from the exchange—the former by bestowing wealth and the latter by ensuring through magico-ritual means success in battle and cattle raids. Much more materialistic was its function as a means of exchanging and redistributing economic wealth. Over the years the extensive granting of land as part of gift exchange became common, leading to the institutionalization of *dāna*, indicative of 'a departure from the earlier socio-economic system as well as the evolving of a changed metaphor for both the donor and the recipient' (p. 45). In '*Dāna* and *Dakṣiṇā* as Forms of Exchange' (chapter 3 of this volume) the author says that perceptions of the other can also form part of an exchange between those who make contact, the motivation for which may differ from group to group depending on differing functions and negotiations.

Essays analysing the image of the barbarian and views about the *yavana*s delve deep into the historical and socio-cultural implications of early Indian representations of the ethnic other. It was probably in the relationship of encounter between the Indo-Aryan speaking pastoralists in northern India and the indigenous people that the question of the 'other' first came up. Aryans considered the indigenous people as aliens (barbarians), expressed by the term *dāsa* or *dasyu*. It is from the later portions of the *Ṛg Veda* onwards that the term *mleccha* begins to evoke the sense of the term 'barbarian'. Thapar points out that the early Indian concept of the barbarian expressed by the term *mleccha* was clearly different from that of Europe. It was not what the *mleccha*s did but how they lived that mattered in early Indian representations. The *ārya* of the *Ārya-deśa* and the *mleccha* of the *Mleccha-deśa* constituted the self and the other in later texts. Subsequently the term *yavana* gains currency in the texts to mean not only Greeks but any group of people from West Asia and the Eastern Mediterranean. Thapar examines the question of the alien as opposed to the *ārya* in detail against the various human groups, their cultural practices, and historical contexts down to the twelfth century.

How this geographical and ethnic view of exclusion relates to Europe and the people from the west is the theme of another essay. It is by the term *yavana* that the Greeks (originally 'Ionians', as the derivation of the term suggests), the Hellenistic Asians, the Graeco-Romans, the Mediterranean peoples, the West Asians, the Arabs, and the Europeans were addressed in the traditional Indian texts. *Yavanas*, though counted among the *mleccha*s who constituted the impure—linguistically, socio-culturally, and geographically—were not totally excluded due to their perceived slightly better social norms and intellectual status. Thapar examines closely how the *yavanas*, despite their migration to and rule over the north-west, remained largely unassimilated due to cultural problems, and explores why the attempts at textual accommodation could not be successful. She also shows how the *brāhmaṇa*s and the Buddhists represented the *yavana*s in different ways, and explains why this became necessary. It has been suggested that there was a persistent need for the image of the alien, which she thinks could be a notional continuum rather than confrontational.

The essay on the Roman maritime trade ('Black Gold: South Asia and the Roman Maritime Trade', chapter 13 of this volume) is one of the very few well-balanced interpretations in the historiography of trade. Perceiving the total context of maritime trade in the light of anthropological insights, it characterises trade as something much more than mere exchange of goods. Hence it not only examines the nature of trade but also its possible socio-cultural impact. It has been presumed that trade was, as well, an occasion for the sharing of ideas, institutions, and cultural practices among the participants in exchange. Naturally, trade often led to the mutation of cultures. Thapar rightly underscores that 'what is of greater significance is an assessment of conditions in areas to which the trade reaches out, the differences from region to region and the perception, both cultural and economic, of the foreign traders among those with whom they trade' (p. 262). She points out that 'mechanisms of exchange were neither uniform nor universal', for they consisted of multiple forms like 'barter, gift-exchange, and formalised trade' involving money, market and commodity (p. 262). The niceties and nuances of the organization of Roman trade at different geographical points and the possible influence on each region have been judiciously appraised.

Themes such as patronage and the community are dealt with in three essays with abundant insights into their contexts and functions. Thapar illustrates beautifully how patronage, essentially a relationship of exchange categorized into at least four significant categories—the socially embedded, the volition of a community, a benign service, and a public activity—in the form of a community's volition points to cultural and social innovations over a given period.

Most essays in the collection are distinctive for their rigorous methodological preoccupation. They illustrate how the historian using epics has to be proficient in textual analysis and knowledgeable in the theoretical literature concerned. Unlike most historians, Thapar reads ancient texts not only for the information they provide about persons and events, but also from the perspective of how they represent past societies and the actions of persons believed to have been historical. Her project is to try and understand the way the past text was looking at its own past. This is an altogether new reading in the sense that her understanding of past texts hardly depends exclusively on their empirically given external truth or on the traditionally given internal truth. Instead, it relies on the insight that their meaning allegorically produces. It is deconstructive reading, pure and simple, that Thapar performs in her analysis of epics, myths, and genealogies; but of course it is confined entirely to her own procedures, precluding the need for using anywhere the technical nomenclature concerned nor leaving any chance to get implicated for postmodern thinking.

Thapar draws some of her methodological insights from the Formalists' morphological analyses of traditional narratives, especially oral compositions. Her ways of understanding the structure, constituent elements, functions, spheres of action, and the embedded meaning of the *Mahābhārata* and *Rāmāyaṇa* vouch for this to a certain extent. This is indeed a difficult exercise, for it demands not only knowledge of narratology and social theory, but also some control over strategies of negotiation between the historical and the a historical. It involves handling the two mutually antagonistic categories in tandem, without letting any one have absolute precedence over the other. Moreover, it is a challenging task to harmonize Formalist synchronism with the historian's sense of temporality. Thapar resolves this by historicizing the features, meanings, and functions of the text through archaeological and inscriptional corroboration. Unlike the Formalists and Structuralists, she does not dismiss the bardic composition imbued with the culturally contingent uniqueness of a traditional narrative as mere stereotypical eulogy. Instead, she accepts it as a text of some realistic sense about presenting persons and events, of course with due caution with regard to the formulaic structure of the narrative.

Likewise, many a riddle that the early Indian texts present in differing genres like poetry, drama, biography, chronicle, inscription, and so on, and the bewildering dimensions of space and time are overcome through a delicate balancing of various factors. It is observed that a change in genre assumes changes in authorship and audience. Authors of the early heroic compositions and epics were bards and poets attached to the clans, but their compositions were worked on by *brāhmaṇas* with a literary bent. The authors of the *Purāṇas* were *brāhmaṇas* who collated the material from various sources and recited it to audiences in temples as well. At the same time, the audience for both would initially have been gatherings of clan members and others.

How a text of the past relates to prior texts is, in certain ways, a question that Thapar has dealt with in great depth. In her subsequent studies, she notes at length that sometimes a text may directly and self-consciously identify with other texts on which it builds, or against which it sets itself; sometimes the reference is more implicit, but intentional; and sometimes the relation is entirely submerged, relying on familiar textual traditions and cultural resources. Her analysis of traditional texts reaches out to embedded texts and captures their functions in the historical context. It involves probing diverse meanings, recurrences, deviations, ambiguities, ironies, contradictions, conflicts, silences, and linguistic oddities. This helps to make out the ways in which a text implies something different from what it openly states. Inevitably this also involves examining the historical, cultural, social, and political processes that bring a genre into being. The strategy throughout the analysis is to look for moments in each text when it refers to itself and to discover how the texts unravel. Thapar's interpretation of what the texts seek to accomplish depends on a close understanding of the embedded text, the context, and the way the text relies on prior texts. It is a rare knowledge generated across texts about their positions, relations, spheres of action, historical function, and cultural impact.

Thapar's studies are noted for their intellectual depth. It is this marked feature that also makes her essays in the present volume a category apart. Empirically exhaustive and invariably theoretical, the essays are neither mere descriptive narratives with the positivist goal of historical reconstruction nor just theoretical discussions within the Marxist framework of historical construction. Stably positioned in her own path, rational and critical, with the freedom to choose the methodology that the problem of study demands, Thapar cannot be branded this way or that. Her studies vouch for the fact that according to her, historical research is a serious intellectual effort to understand past processes—a sustained effort of creative negotiations between theories and sources.

Thapar's heuristics is theory-driven. It is far more than identification and linking up of the data from the diffuse and fragmentary source material, since her studies often resort to the implicit and the underlying in the sources. This necessitates sustained theoretical engagement to reach out to the source material's deeper connotations. Being conceptual and analytically constituted, Thapar's arguments seldom depend on denotations at the surface of the source material. It makes the formulation of evidence theoretical. Her evidence is not explicit in the sources until enabled by theory. Nevertheless, as the logical connection between her premises and conclusions is clear, for the serious reader her interpretations are always convincing. Interpretations being invariably dependent on insights drawn from multiple theories, Thapar's hermeneutics preclude the dominance of any particular theory. Though self-consciously eclectic, her interpretations are always consistent and invariably free of conflicts.

This is a critical methodological track ensuring a delicate balance between the claims of absolute certainty and total uncertainty about the knowledge generated. Behind the causality there is no direct deduction from an all-encompassing general theory presupposing universal generalization. Essentially hypothetico-deductive but with a relative precedence of the particular over the general, Thapar's approach remains immune to epistemic branding into modern or postmodern. This not only makes her analyses methodologically unassailable to a great extent but also makes her interpretations remarkably enduring. An essay in this collection that was published way back in 1971 is still state-of-the-art material in methodology as well as interpretation. So are several others of the late 1970s, each of which is distinctively significant in Indian historiography for the strikingly fresh knowledge it embodies. These essays challenge the frontiers of early Indian historiography and break new ground in conceptualization.

Written in elegant and powerful prose, Thapar's writings are eminently readable and ideally suited to the general as well as the specialist readership. The essays in the volume, though mostly familiar, provide readers with the new experience of the author's rare academic creativity, rendered plausible through an interview wherein she reflects on her methodology. I am sure that these essays will continue to foster breakthrough research in the history of early India.

1

*The Historian and the Epic**

The historian's interest in epic literature arises from the argument that epic literature generally documents a period which is prior to that of early recorded history. The epic does not exclude other data where it may be available but tends all the same to intrude on the consciousness of the historian claiming to be the primary source. However, the epic is essentially a literary crystallisation of the heroic ideal. By its very nature, therefore, it is not to be taken as factual evidence but as the representation of an ideal—a caution which some historians either ignore or forget when using the epic as source material.

Epic literature is intrinsically a part of the oral tradition, composed, compiled and collated over many centuries from bardic fragments and enriched with interpolations of later times.[1] In the Indian tradition, shorter compositions such as the *gāthās, dānastutis, nārāśaṁsīs* and *ākhyānas* were the precursors of the epic. That the *Mahābhārata* was put together at various times is clear from the internal evidence, for in one case it commences with Vaiśampāyana, the disciple of Vyāsa, reciting the epic at the Janamejaya sacrifice and in another with the recitation by the *sūta* Ugraśravas at the sacrifice of the *ṛṣi* Śaunaka which took place a generation later than the first occasion. An earlier and shorter text than the present one also appears to have been known.[2] The Aranyaka-parvan provides an excellent illustration of the adding on of bardic episodes to the main narrative. Ultimately the entire collection was redacted, probably by Bhṛgu authors, and this imbues the text with a relative unity of theme and literary form.

The making of the epic inevitably creates problems for the historian, who, in the past, has tended to treat the epic as a single text of a particular period and has attempted to test it for historical authenticity. Epic events can rarely be precisely dated nor can one speak of an epic period nor indeed can the narrative of the epic be treated necessarily and without cross-evidence as authentic history. What is of significance to the historian are the assumptions made about the past in the epic and about the changes which earlier societies have undergone, assumptions which eventually will lead us to understand the historical function of the epic rather than to limit our exploration to its historicity. This is especially relevant with the Indian epics since one of the characteristics of Indian social history is the extensive range of social formations which co-existed in all periods, even to the present. The appeal of the epic varies in accordance with the particular society to which it relates at particular points in the text, and it is in the sifting of these segments that the historian can contribute. In such a situation even the critical edition may eventually be found to require some further pruning.

Historians have made many attempts to date the culminating event of the epic, the war between the Pāṇḍavas and the Kauravas. The suggested dates range from the fourth millennium BC to the seventh century BC and the evidence for these draws on a variety of sources, astronomy, archaeology and genealogical history; but none of these dates are universally acceptable. To search for a conclusive date is in a sense to search for the impossible since the purpose of epic literature is not a concern with a chronological sequence of events. Even the central event may not be historical since it is pivotal to the action of the epic but not necessarily to the reconstruction of history. In the vision of the bard, the event, which may once have been historical, can transcend its historicity and become symbolic. It would seem to me, therefore, that it is more relevant for the historian to analyse the assumptions of the epic which would undoubtedly provide an insight into the society of a people, which insight may not be chronologically exact but which would nevertheless enrich our understanding of the past.

Many decades ago scholars argued that there were at least two traditions incorporated into the epic, the original epic and the pseudo-epic.[3] One was the earlier, narrative layer reciting a series of stories based on bardic material. The other consisted of a number of didactic sections relating to the *rāja-dharma*, *mokṣa-dharma* and the practices of different sections of society, which drew ostensibly on the *dharma-śāstra* literature and which were interpolated into the epic at later periods. The rationale for these interpretations would be that with the conversion of the epic into sacred literature, it was necessary that it also incorporate discussions on ethical norms and the definitions of authority both temporal and sacred. I would like to support this distinction and argue that there is a difference in the depiction of society in these two layers and that difference is important to the historical understanding of the epic.

The narrative sections seem to depict societies of tribal chiefships moving towards the change to a state system with monarchy as the norm. There is a strong emphasis on lineage rights and functions and a fairly flexible inclusion of a variety of kinship forms. The economy tends to be pastoral-cum-agrarian in which cattle raids and gift-exchange are important components. Heroism is wrapped up in the defence of territory and the honour of the kinsfolk. The didactic sections in contrast assume a highly stratified society with frequent reference to caste functions rather than lineage functions. The political system assumes well-established monarchies and an increasing concentration of authority in the hands of the king. The economy is essentially agrarian with a familiarity with urban centres as commercial units. Gift-giving involves the granting of land in addition to other forms of wealth. In contrasting the differences between the two sections it can be argued that since the evidence from the narrative section is drawn from the actual happenings as described and the information which they provide on social formations is gathered through inference by the historian, there is, therefore, less likelihood of deliberate interpolation in the text. The didactic sections concentrate on the legalities of social functioning and leave little to historical inference. I would like to examine what appear to me to be two diverse traditions in the light of archaeological, anthropological and historical evidence.

Although the epic story finally involves the clans and kingdoms of virtually the entire northern half of the subcontinent, the core of the narrative focuses on the Gaṅga-Yamuna *doāb* and its vicinity and more particularly the upper *doāb*. The territory of the Kurus extended from the Indo-Gangetic divide into the upper *doāb* with capitals at Hastināpura and Indraprastha. That of the Pañcālas, who play an important part in the narrative, lay in the adjoining areas to the south-east. The proximity of the Kuru and Pañcāla would suggest both hostility and close alliances and the later Vedic texts speak of an eventual alliance. This would not be incompatible with the evidence of the epic in that the Pāṇḍavas were the successors to the Kuru realm and had a marriage alliance with the Pañcālas.

The geographical location provides another possible dimension of evidence which is gradually being brought into the discussion in the form of archaeological data. The earliest settlements in the area date to the start of the second millennium BC. There is evidence now to argue that the Harappan tradition did bequeath some survivals to the later cultures as seen at sites with late Harappan and Painted Grey ware settlements.[4] The earlier Ochre Colour Pottery Culture although indigenous to the region is by all accounts a relatively primitive culture of small settlements and inferior living standards. Its connections with the Copper Hoards which would indicate a more advanced society are by no means established. Undoubtedly the dominant culture of the region is the Painted Grey Ware or PGW variously dated from the late second or early first millennium BC. Attempts have been made to identify this culture with later Vedic literature[5] on the basis of common features of material remains as well as with the *Mahābhārata* by referring to common geographical locations.[6] Excavations at Hastināpura and Indraprastha show a flourishing PGW level which in the case of the latter is also the earliest occupational level. It has further been argued that there is evidence of a flood at Hastināpura which terminates the PGW level (which at this site dates to about 800 BC) and that this may be the flood referred to in the epic as having occurred during the period of Nicakṣu when the city was deserted and the capital shifted to Kauśāmbī.

The distribution of the PGW generally conforms to the core areas occupied by the clans and kingdoms who participated in the events of the epic. There is a noticeably larger number of settlements and the demographic increase may have had to do with an improvement in material culture.[7] The settlements are clearly pre-urban, consisting of huts of wattle and daub with rarely any structural remains of a substantial quality. Of the material remains the most striking is the occurrence of iron artefacts, mainly items of warfare and a few used in agriculture. The presence of weights would point to some minimal degree of exchange other than primitive barter. There is a profusion of animal bones particularly of horse and cattle which judging from the literary data formed the major units of wealth. The widespread occurrence of horse bones is new to the Indian scene since horse bones from late levels of Indus civilization sites are scant. The quantity of cattle bones is also larger for this period. Many which come from domestic contexts often carry marks suggestive of the eating of cattle flesh for food. There is a striking absence of graves or burials which is in sharp contrast to the earlier Indus civilization as well as the contemporary megalithic cultures. It would seem that cremation was the normal form of disposing the dead in the PGW culture.

The culture which succeeds the PGW is the Northern Black Polished Ware culture or the NBP, dated to the sixth century BC and continuing into the Mauryan period. Here there is evidence of a qualitative and quantitative change from the preceding PGW culture.[8] The demographic picture shows larger concentrations of populations at single sites. The mud plaster huts are replaced with well-defined structures of mud-brick and burnt brick. Brick lined drains, soakage pits and terracotta ringwells indicate a civic life of no mean proportions. There is a substantial increase in the use of iron artefacts many of which are now employed commonly in domestic use. Above all there is also the presence of punch-marked as well as uninscribed cast coins indicating a major change in economic exchange relations involving the use of coined money and an incipient commercial economy.

For the historian, the archaeological co-relation poses a dilemma. If the material culture of the epic is co-related with the earlier PGW culture with which the narrative sections of the epic seem to agree to some extent, then the date of these sections can be placed between the mid-second and the mid-first millennia BC but the culture will have to be described as pre-urban, transitional between pastoralism and an agrarian economy and probably supporting tribal chiefships on the edge of change to state forms and monarchical systems. The excavated evidence of these levels at Hastināpura and Indraprastha in neither case suggest the splendours of great kingdoms with wealthy capitals; rather, they were people with a technologically unsophisticated culture. The elaborate descriptions of material culture with references to a developed agrarian economy and prosperous towns as given in the didactic sections of the epic would perforce have to be dated to periods later than the mid-first millennium BC in any co-relation with archaeological evidence.

Archaeological continuities can, in some instances, be connected back to the Harappan period in the area under discussion. This makes it possible to suggest that some at least of the traditions recorded in the epic could also, in origin, go back to this period. But this does not mean that the epic or the main events date to the Harappan period.

It would seem apparent, therefore, that the historian would have to argue for different parts of the epic having been composed at different periods and integrated into the text at a relatively late point in time. The basic question is again not that of the date of the epic but the elucidation of the fragments which have been stitched, as it were, into the epic.

Attempts have also been made to try and date the epic using the information provided on the genealogies and lineages of various clans. It has been argued that if an average length of anywhere between fourteen and twenty-two years is taken for each generation, it is then possible to work out a chronological scheme by adding up the number of generations listed in a genealogy. However, anthropological research on lineage data over the last few decades proves that such data for purposes of chronological reconstruction is notoriously unreliable. The chronological function of genealogies is primarily as time-fillers or as bardic mechanisms for suggesting continuities and at best genealogies can provide clues to relative time in terms of some events being earlier or later than others. The kind of information for which genealogies can be used with greater reliance is in locating the geographical distribution and migration of clans, and in the degree to which they reflect descent patterns and kinship relations among clans and individuals. Genealogies are sometimes deliberately forced into patterns to indicate either allegorically or actually a particular view of the past. Such patterns are not historically factual although they are of value in analysing the social assumptions made by the authors. The Indian genealogical tradition is not lacking in consciously patterned genealogies.

The genealogies as given in the epic provide a series of lineage patterns which raise a number of problems. Of the two major lineages epic events involve only the clans of the Candravaṃśa or Aila lineage, the Ikṣvāku lineage being the concern of the other epic, the *Rāmāyaṇa*. Within the Candravaṃśa lineage there is a clear separation between what might be called the nuclear clans and the peripheral clans. The essential narrative involves the descendants of Pūru and Yadu and those of the other three brothers play a marginal role. Clans unconnected with the Candravaṃśa lineage are also introduced into the peripheral sections where possibly these stories were in origin part of a separate bardic tradition. The final battle serves the function of drawing together all the disjointed fragments since both the nuclear and the peripheral clans participate in the war, contributing to making the event in effect the end of an epoch.

The central events of the epic revolve around the conflict between collateral cousins on the succession to a political inheritance. A seemingly simple conflict turns out to have many layers of contradictions. The descendants of Pūru, the youngest son of Yayāti, are in any case not the rightful rulers of *madhya-deśa*, for the kingdom should have gone to Yadu, the eldest son. This change in the law of succession suggests either that primogeniture was not sufficiently well-established or, what is more likely, that the infringement of the rule required an explanation—and this was the story of Yayāti seeking to exchange his old age with the youth of one of his five sons, an exchange which is ultimately conceded by the youngest,[9] leading to the disinheritance of the eldest. That the father had the right to make this change in succession points to the power of the patriarch. The right of primogeniture was still in a state of flux judging by the many instances of what has been called the 'disqualified eldest', the eldest son being debarred from his patrimony.[10]

In a sense the epic events are at one level an exoneration of the descendants of Yadu. The most important Yādava in the epic is the Andhaka-Vṛṣṇi chief, Kṛṣṇa the son of Vasudeva. The honouring of this Yādava at the *rājasūya* of Yudhiṣṭhira sets off a series of hostilities which aggravate the antagonism to a point of no return. Kṛṣṇa's role as the charioteer is crucial to the outcome of the battle. Even if it is argued that this was a later interpolation and may have had a surreptitious Bhṛgu motivation, there is little doubt that the ultimate victory of the Pāṇḍavas is also the victory of the Yādava chief.

Among the many lineage patterns perhaps the most curious is the repeated occurrence of the groups of five-brothers, which turn up at many points in the Candravaṃśa lineage. Sometimes the five are split into three and two, being born of two wives. Vedic literature refers to the *pañcajanāḥ* or five clans which phrase has been variously translated.[11] Its persistence as a lineage pattern does suggest a five-clan classification. In terms of the narrative, the lineage opens with Yayāti and his five sons, born of two wives.[12] At various points in the genealogy and particularly where new geographical areas are brought in, the five-clan classification seems to reoccur. Thus when the Ganga valley is settled it is mainly by Uparicara and his five sons. The same pattern is repeated in eastern India with Bali and his five sons. The closing of the lineage also occurs with the five Pāṇḍavas and significantly there is a repetition of the pattern of three and two almost as a mirror image of the three and two pattern of the sons of Yayāti.

In this connection it may be mentioned that the etymology of the name Pañcāla remains obscure. It is believed to have a confederacy of five clans. The termination *āl* has been linked linguistically to various words indicating a household or a clan. The five-brother classification cannot be coincidental and carries a meaning which has yet to be unravelled. If it reflects some connection with the concept of the *pañcavīra* as prevalent among the Vṛṣṇis, it still speaks of attempts to fit the genealogy into a pattern.

Among the major puzzles of the lineage is that which concerns the immediate ancestry of the protagonists. In the Pūru line of succession, the eldest son Devāpi retires to the forest and the kingdom is inherited by his younger brother Śantanu who marries Gaṅgā and has by her a son, Bhīṣma, the rightful successor. But Śantanu also marries Satyavatī who bears him two sons and demands that Bhīṣma remain celibate so that her sons inherit the kingdom, to which demand Bhīṣma readily agrees and remains true to his word. Neither of Satyavatī's sons by Śantanu can procreate. Therefore, Kṛṣṇa Dvaipāyana, her son by Parāśara and born out of wedlock, is required by the law of levirate to procreate sons on his step-brother's wives. This accounts for the birth of Dhṛtarāṣṭra and Pāṇḍu. In terms of blood ties therefore, the Pūru lineage terminates with Bhīṣma for neither Dhṛtarāṣṭra nor Pāṇḍu carry any blood connection with the lineage. For a society in which kinship ties are crucial this seems to be a strange situation. The fight for succession is entirely among affinal relatives, since neither Dhṛtarāṣṭra nor Pāṇḍu are agnatically related to the lineage. It is also strange that Kṛṣṇa Dvaipāyana should play the dual role of being both the progenitor of the Pāṇḍavas and the Kauravas as well as the compiler of the epic. Was this a pun on authorship taken to a logical extreme where the author of the epic projected himself as the progenitor of the protagonists as well? Or can this be taken as a veiled statement that the events involving the Pāṇḍavas and the Kauravas were added on at a later point? The legitimacy of the claim of the sons of Pāṇḍu is further weakened by their having been fathered by various gods, although at the symbolic level this adds to the allegorical dimension of the epic.

Political events arise out of lineage confrontations and lineage forms are closely related to marriage systems. Three totally different marriage systems occur within the same family in the generations after Bhīṣma and this seems highly improbable in a society where marriage rules were generally very carefully observed. The marriages of Dhṛtarāṣṭra to Gāndhārī and of Pāṇḍu to Mādrī and Kuntī are quite normal, following the usual pattern of clans marrying out to extend alliances and marrying among those who would be regarded as equal in status. In the next generation the five Paṇḍavas accept the system of fraternal polyandry which is clearly alien and remains unexplained except at the level of a misunderstanding on the part of Kuntī and some rather involved stories of previous births. Curiously the five sons of this marriage play a distinctly subordinate role in the epic. Each of the five Pāṇḍavas marries other women and it is the sons of these which are central to the story. The ultimate line of succession goes through the son of Arjuna by Subhadrā, the sister of Kṛṣṇa. Apart from the fact that in systems of fraternal polyandry other marriage alliances are not permitted, this particular marriage was a cross-cousin marriage, Arjuna marrying his mother's brother's daughter, which in itself is disapproved of in the later didactic sections of the epic.[13] Cross-cousin marriage was acceptable to the Yādavas and this may explain why it was permitted in the narrative. Diverse forms of marriage suggest that there may have been conflicting kinship systems associated with different clans and these were sought to be adjusted in the narrative. The Pāṇḍavas are not only flexible in their marriage alliances but seem to have generally functioned in a manner which seems opposed to the conventional patriarchal modes. The dominating figure in the Pāṇḍava household is that of the matriarch, Kuntī. Apart from her the other person on whom the five brothers are heavily dependent is Kṛṣṇa Vāsudeva, who is their maternal uncle's son. Possibly the objection to honouring him at the *rājasūya* ceremony may have been a much more fundamental objection to the continuation of a particular kinship system rather than the declared reason of his being of lower status than other guests present at the ceremony. The eventual succession of Abhimanyu and his descendants to the Kuru realm doubtless had an unqualified approval from the Yādavas since he was Kṛṣṇa's sister's son which was a recognised relationship in the order of succession. It is ironic that in spite of the war, the succession was not by primogeniture.

Lineage links had a direct connection with two aspects of political power, legitimacy and territory, claims to both being largely based on proving kinship connections—hence the importance of continual reference to genealogies and the possible manipulating of genealogies in favour of political adjustments. Political forms in the epic are not sharply differentiated but they tend to move from tribal chiefships or oligarchies to kingdoms. The epic seems to veer from one to the other indicating that the initial composition may have been in the transitional period of change from tribal chiefships to monarchies. The hidden antagonism between the two is reflected in Kṛṣṇa Vāsudeva's explanation for the hostility between his clan and its allies and the ruler of Magadha, Jarāsandha.[14]

Clan based territories are of various kinds and the most frequent reference is to the eighteen *kulas* of the Andhaka-Vṛṣṇi *saṅgha*.[15] In the later didactic sections such territories become the exception and kingdoms are the norm. The crux of the political functioning of the *gaṇa-saṅgha* system was the smooth working of the assembly, where the senior kinsmen met and took decisions. This was in contrast to the declining role of the assembly in monarchies where it was gradually reduced to an advisory body whose views had customary sanction but were not binding on the king. To the extent that the role of the senior kinsmen was crucial to the narrative of the epic, as for example in the decision to challenge the Pāṇḍavas at a game of dice, it can be argued that the political form was closer to tribal chiefships than to absolute monarchies.

Central to the argument of the distinction between lineage-based societies and kingdoms is the definition of the term *rājan*. This has generally been translated rather casually as 'king' in the sense of a monarch, but the terms used for a king have to be examined more closely. It has recently been suggested that the etymology and context of the word in Vedic sources at least would suggest a tribal leader rather than a king.[16] The territorial link becomes more apparent in later texts with the use of terms such as *rāṣṭra*, and *janapada*. Similarly, terms incorporating *bali* (tribute) are more common in the earlier texts and terms such as *bhāga* (share and therefore tax) occur later.

Clearly defined descriptions of monarchical functioning occur in the didactic sections as in the Śāntiparvan. Theories explaining the origin of kingship are characterised by the loss of utopia.[17] The earliest time is the pristine golden age before the manifestation of pride, arrogance and oppression which results in a condition of evil. This is sometimes symbolised as a condition of drought echoing the earliest stereotypes linking rainfall with good government. A king is appointed by the gods in order to terminate the state of chaos.

Such an appointment inevitably carries with it the sanction to use authority. The legitimacy of kingship now extends from birth and lineage to include the wielding of *daṇḍa*, literally a rod, symbolising the coercive authority of the state. A *kṣatriya* without *daṇḍa* is incapable of enjoying the earth.[18] The abolition of *daṇḍa* would lead to total chaos and destruction.

Such passages invariably draw on the *rāja-dharma* sections of the *dharmaśāstras*. The king has rights which place him above his kinsmen but he also has to perform an elaborate number of duties. Significantly the citizens of the state are now described euphemistically as the children of the king, (*prajā*), but they are no longer treated as a vast array of kinsmen. To back up the moral sanction of authority there is the reality of the king performing the role of the ultimate tax-collector, where the right to tax is the complement to the right to wield authority.

Not surprisingly, the didactic sections also include at this stage elaborate rules regarding the functioning of the various castes. It is conceded that *varṇa* was not something which existed from the start but began with the decline of *tapas* and by way of explaining the origin of the caste, the *puruṣa-sūkta* story is repeated.[19] Since the original epic had as its central point the ethos of the *kṣatriya*, this continues to be the main concern of the didactic sections, but the code has clearly changed. Heroic sentiments relating to the protection of the honour of the clan and feats of personal valour in battle, give way to the more familiar duties of the *kṣatriya* as listed in later texts, the giving of *dāna* or gifts in charity, the ordering of sacrificial ceremonies and the study of the *Vedas*.[20]

The giving of gifts or *dāna* did not mean as it once did at the time of the *rājasūya* ceremony a general liberality to all assembled; but it now meant specifically the making of liberal gifts to *brāhmaṇas* as these alone were believed to be deserving.[21] This was just one aspect of the wider assertion of the superiority of the *brāhmaṇa* which reads like a chorus in the didactic sections.[22] The emphasis on gift-giving introduces the connection between kingship and wealth, the latter being essential to and an indication of good government. But the role and computation of wealth also changes as between the narrative and the didactic sections of the epic.

The first big occasion for gift-giving in the epic is the *rājasūya* sacrifice to be performed by Yudhiṣṭhira, described in the Sabhāparvan. On the announcement of the *rājasūya*, various tribes and peoples bring their gifts, the nature of the gift indicating status.[23] Another method of ranking the gift-bearers is whether or not they are admitted to the ceremony in the first round, some having to enhance their gifts before admission. The ranking showed whether the gift was to be treated as political tribute, although the nature of the *rājasūya* being what it was, the assumption was that all gifts are tribute and are therefore referred to as *bali*. The elaborate ceremonies required of the *rājasūya* ritual were a means of distributing the accumulated wealth.

The list of items included gold, horses, elephants, slaves and textiles. The first three items could come from relatively less complex societies. Slaves would indicate a greater degree of stratification unless they were prisoners of war. Textiles are associated mainly with central Asia in this list. There is little mention of commodities suggesting specialisation of labour and craft production such as would be associated with developed urban centres and trade. Another definition of what constituted wealth can be culled from the sequences in the game of dice in which Yudhiṣṭhira stakes his wealth.[24] This consists of gold, pearls, chariots, horses, slaves (both male and female) and some for the entertainment of guests, cattle, sheep and goats. Finally he stakes his city (*pura*), his territory (*janapada*), the wealth of his citizens barring that of the *brāhmaṇas* and ultimately himself and his family. Here again the emphasis is on gold, animals and slaves. The latter are clearly domestic slaves working in the household and not slaves involved in agricultural or craft production which is a significant distinction.

Perhaps the most striking aspect of the listing of wealth is that no mention is made of any privately owned land. The staking of the *janapada* or territory over which Yudhiṣṭhira ruled was of course quite distinct from any reference to cultivated agricultural land. By way of contrast the importance of livestock is highlighted in the list. The pastoral economy finds repeated reference both directly and indirectly in the narrative sections. The Kauravas, for example, organise a *ghoṣa-yātrā*, a cattle expedition to the *Dvaita-vana*.[25] This was obviously a regular procedure since it is the occasion for counting the cows and branding the calves, with the forest pastures providing the possibility of hunting. A vast expedition sets out consisting of the younger Kauravas and their friends and retainers together with horses, elephants, soldiers and hunters. That the permission of the *rājā* had to be obtained and that the young men were personally involved in supervising the expedition indicates that it had an important function in the economy and also suggests that they were more in the nature of chiefs rather than well-entrenched monarchs. That the *ghoṣa-yātrā* carried an element of the potlatch is evident from the distribution of presents and gifts to the cattle herders by the princes. The battle between the Kauravas and the Gandharvas on this occasion is doubtless a reflection of the cattle raids which must have occurred as part of these expeditions.

Rights over grazing lands and hunting lands would be territorial rights, the infringement of which would be opposed as strongly as the infringement of cultivated fields in later times. What mattered in the former situation was the prohibition on trespass rather than on the fear of being dislodged from the land.

It has been argued that there is an indirect reference to primitive agriculture in the episode of the burning of the Khāṇḍavavana, where the forest in the vicinity of Indraprastha was burnt and the land cleared for cultivation.[26] The burning of a forest is indicative of the early stages of an agrarian economy when population groups are relatively small and can survive on this low yielding method of cultivation. References to agriculture and agricultural processes are comparatively infrequent in the narrative sections of the text. A well-developed agrarian economy would compute wealth in terms of fields and stocks of grain apart from other items such as livestock and gold. It would reflect some differentiation in land ownership and among those working on the land and would make some reference to rainfall and irrigation. Such references occur in the didactic sections such as in the description given by Nārada of a properly governed state.[27] Cultivation was probably still within the confines of the clan since agricultural slaves and peasant cultivators are absent in the narrative sections. Slaves are generally said to be those captured in war or born of slave mothers or reduced to slavery as a result of loss in gambling. Female slaves generally outnumber male slaves and are described as doing domestic chores and entertaining guests.

Epic society as depicted in the narrative sections has little use for the storing of wealth and there is a constant urging that it be distributed. This would prevent the growth of the kind of economic surplus associated with intensive agriculture, well-established monarchical systems using this revenue and professional priests entirely dependent on the community for a living. But this picture derived from the narrative sections gives way to what appears to be a new economic situation in the didactic sections of the text. The change from a pastoral-cum-agricultural economy to one more intensively dependent on cultivation is most clearly seen in the pattern of gift-giving classified as *dāna*, and discussed in detail in the didactic sections, as for example in the Anuśāsana-parvan. Two features are particularly noticeable: the material content of *dāna* changes from animal wealth and gold to include land and secondly there is a shift from a widescale distribution of wealth to the bestowal of wealth solely on the deserving *brāhmaṇa*. This may have been linked with the growth of professional priests who had little means of support other than *dāna* and even their professional fees are preferentially described as a form of gift-giving than as wages. This is, indeed, a contrast to the distribution of wealth during the *rājasūya* which involved feeding the many thousands present at the ceremony, and the generous giving of gifts.

The growing importance of agriculture becomes apparent from the late part of the text when in addition to land the donating of a tank is also mentioned.[28] The ideal tank, it is said, is one where the water fills during the rains and remains available throughout the year. The mention of tank irrigation would in itself make this passage fairly late. Ultimately there is a section eulogising the gifting of land in which *pṛthivīdāna* is described as the best form of *dāna*. It is equivalent to all other gifts and to sacrificial rituals. The rewards are multiple: a heaven full of *apsarās*, rebirth as a king and the transcending of all sins. Land is superior we are told, because it is immovable and indestructible, its value is enhanced each time there is a crop and it can yield other kinds of wealth.[29]

From what I have said so far it should be apparent that for the historian analysing the epic there still remain some fundamental problems. There are as yet very few means of identifying epic events with archaeological evidence. The most useful comparative study would be one focusing on detailed analyses of the socio-economic culture both from excavations and the narrative sections of the epic. This would at least help towards clarifying our understanding of segments of epic society.

The reconstruction of history from genealogy has to be treated with great caution, for, as I have tried to show, genealogical data can be pushed into a deliberately designed pattern as in the frequency of the five-brother or the five-clan pattern or in the attempts to balance senior and junior lineages. But the information which genealogies provide on kinship systems and on the basis of which social forms can be projected, may perhaps be more reliable. Such information does at any rate suggest fresh possibilities of examining the nature of social relations although, here again, as I have indicated in the example of the putting together of a variety of contradictory marriage systems among the Pāṇḍavas, this information should not be taken literally but as a pointer to co-existing systems. The sifting of economic and technological data could also be of help in separating various sections of the text, now that we have a rudimentary background for such data from other historical sources.

In the past decades the *Mahābhārata* has been the source of an infinite number of studies relating to religion and ethics. This is perfectly legitimate in view of the unusual role of the epic as sacred literature in the Indian tradition. Yet often, embedded in sacred literature is a vast amount of information on what might be called the backbone of a society—its social and economic structure: more so, in literature which has been recognisably sacralised. It is this which now calls for the attention of the historian.

The distinction between the narrative and the didactic sections of the *Mahābhārata* can perhaps be explained if the text is seen as reflecting the transition between two kinds of societies, a new age reflecting on an age that has ended. The heroic world of chiefships had faded out and dynasties had taken over. But the latter were still seeking legitimisation from the world of the heroes and some of the new deities were the associates of the heroes, hence the need for the epic to continue into later times.

The epic is historical to the extent that it presents a view of the past not necessarily in sequential order and frequently with many layers so compressed as to seem contradictory, which we today seek to explain as allegory. The complexity of this historical perspective has first to be determined before it can be regarded as factual data. What is required is perhaps an endeavour to understand the nature of the epic and its historical function rather than its historicity.

Notes and References

* Bhandarkar Anniversary Address, delivered on 27 August 1979, ABORI, LX, i–iv, 199–213. Published in *Cultural Pasts: Essays in Early Indian History*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2000.

1. R. Finnigan, *Oral Poetry*, Cambridge, 1977; M.B. Emeneau, 'Oral Poets of South India—the Todas', in Dell Hymes (ed.), *Language in Culture and Society*, New York, 1964.
2. *Āśvalāyana Gṛhya Sūtra*, III.4.4.
3. E. Washburn Hopkins, *The Great Epic of India*, New York, 1901; V.S. Sukthankar, *On the Meaning of the Mahābhārata*, Bombay, 1957.
4. J.P. Joshi, 'Interlocking of Late Harappan Culture and Painted Grey Ware Culture in the Light of Recent Excavations', *Man and Environment*, New Delhi, 1978, vol. II, pp. 100–3.
5. R.S. Sharma, 'The Later Vedic Phase and the Painted Grey Ware', *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress*, Calcutta, 1974.

6. B.B. Lal, 'Excavations at Hastinapur ...', *Ancient India*, nos 10 and 11, 1954–55.
7. Lal, 'Excavations at Hastinapur ...'. See also V. Tripathi, *The Painted Grey Ware*, Delhi, 1976.
8. B. Allchin and R. Allchin, *The Birth of Indian Civilisation*, pp. 207ff, Harmondsworth, 1968.
9. Ādi-parvan, 70–80.
10. J.A.B. van Buitenen, *The Mahābhārata*, Chicago, 1973, vol. 1, p. xviii.
11. A.A. Macdonell and A.B. Keith, *Vedic Index*, Delhi, 1967, vol. 1, pp. 466ff.
12. Ādi-parvan, 57.27ff, 70.31ff; The analysis of the symbolism of the five Pāṇḍava brothers has been made by Stig Wikander but he restricts it to just these five in 'Pandavasagen och Mahabharata mythiska forutsänniger'. *Religion och Bibel*, VI, 1947 (pers com. B.L.S.).
13. Anuśāsana-parvan, 44–6.
14. Sabhā-parvan, 13.7ff.
15. Sabhā-parvan, 13.35ff.
16. R.S. Sharma, 'From Gopati to Bhupati', IV World Sanskrit Conference, Weimar, 1979.
17. Śānti-parvan, 259.7ff; 283.5ff.
18. Śānti-parvan, 14.14.
19. Śānti-parvan, 285.3ff.
20. Śānti-parvan, 60.8ff; Anuśāsana-parvan, 127–33.
21. Śānti-parvan, 20.10.
22. Anuśasana-parvan, 137.
23. Sabhā-parvan, 47.
24. Sabhā-parvan, 47, 48.
25. Āraṇyaka-parvan, 227–9.
26. D.D. Kosambi, *The Culture and Civilisation of Ancient India in Its Historical Outline*, London, 1965, p. 117.
27. Sabhā-parvan, 5.
28. Anuśāsana-parvan, 99.1ff.
29. Anuśāsana-parvan, 61.2ff.

2

Some Aspects of the Economic Data in the Mahābhārata*

Epic literature emerges out of 'heroic ages' and often retains the flavour of such an age in spite of repeated redactions of the text and the interpolation of later ages. This lends to the text elements of internal contradictions as well as a compendium-like quality. The *Mahābhārata* is no exception. The range of time over which the interpolations have been added reduces the flavour of the original. Nevertheless one method of attempting to do the virtually impossible in trying to reach out to the original is to examine the text from the perspective of one theme and ascertain the dominant form. An attempt is being made in this paper to try and locate the predominant economic structure which forms a background to the events described in the early sections of the story. Some distinction between early and late may perhaps be allowed in terms of the context of the evidence quoted. If an action is part of the intrinsic narrative of the epic, it may be taken as belonging to an earlier stratum than a situation which is being described at an abstract level in the many didactic portions of the text.[1] There is a greater probability of the latter being interpolations.

A study has already been made of the geographical and economic data available in at least four sections of the text—the Ādiparvan, Sabhāparvan, Āraṇyakaparvan, and Bhīṣmaparvan.[2] The intention of this essay is to examine the data and compare it with other parts of the text and to suggest that the predominant economy of the epic is a mixture of pastoralism and agriculture with an earlier emphasis on the former (as evidenced in the narrative sections) gradually changing to the latter which is more apparent in the didactic sections. The epic in origin relates to clan-based society with effective power invested in chiefships and where the structure does not preclude social stratification: a society which gradually gave way to monarchies of the more conventional type based on developed agriculture.

Among the more interesting and perhaps lesser known studies of the *Mahābhārata* are two which have for many years been neglected by Indologists but which are now coming into notice again. Marcel Mauss in his study of gift-giving and gift-exchange devotes a substantial part of the book to a discussion of *dāna* in the Anuśāsana-parvan.[3] G.J. Held took as his cue a statement from this book in which Mauss asserts that, 'Le Mahabharata est l'histoire d'un gigantesque potlatch'.[4] Held has argued that the Kauravas and the Pāṇḍavas were two phratries involved in a potlatch competition: the latter being symbolised in the two major events of the epic—the game of dice and the war.

Both potlatch and gift-exchange as economic systems generally relate to chiefships. Traces of the system very often continue into later times when chiefships have given way to kingdoms and the traces are particularly evident in ritual situations. But their economic function begins to decline when the economy of the society changes. The potlatch is a ceremony in which property is lavishly given away or even destroyed in order to acquire or to maintain social status, the distribution of wealth being symbolic of status.[5] The wealth is often a ceremonial gift/gifts given by a chief acting as the host to other chiefs and their kinsmen: the gathering of chiefs thus becoming a kind of council of both appeal and approval. The potlatch is also often the occasion when an event of importance is announced such as a birth or a marriage or the acquisition of office or of territory and sanction is given to the event by those present. The giving of gifts on such occasions is strictly in order of precedence and priority, as is also the seating arrangement of those present which in turn reinforces social rank and social solidarity. Gift-giving is not a one-way process since it is assumed that at some later date the invitees will also have a potlatch, and this keeps goods in circulation. A rival potlatch can be held if there is an alternate claimant to the title. This results in a competition with even more wealth being distributed or, if need be, destroyed. A further form is what has been called 'a face-saving potlatch, where if an indignity has occurred, the potlatch is the means of wiping it off. (Here perhaps, the closest Indian equivalent might be the *prāyaścitta*.)

Gift-exchange is characteristic of societies which have passed the stage of clans and families making exchanges but have not arrived at the stage of the money and market economy. It involves individual gift-making at two levels: one is largely to ensure the circulation of goods and the other is where the gift is substantial enough to serve the purpose of acting as a symbol of status and recognition. Gift-giving revolves around the notions of obligation, of purchase and of sacrifice.[6] The spirit of the person is attached to the gift and a return gift of equal value becomes obligatory. In the form of sacrifice, the secular notion underlying a gift is the need to circulate and distribute wealth which is emphasised by the belief that if wealth is distributed it returns in a larger amount. Gift-giving has many dimensions. There is the ceremonial exchange among kinsmen on ritual occasions, particularly birth and marriage. There are payments in the form of gifts for services where the actual transaction is disguised as a gift. There are exchanges of material goods against privileges and non-material possessions. There may be the exchange of material goods of little value merely to assert a social and ritual relationship. The most directly functional form of gift-exchange is, of course, barter.

In the *Māhabhārata* the first big occasion for gift-giving is the *rājasūya* sacrifice to be performed by Yudhiṣṭhira and the details of which are described in the Sabhāparvan. The *rājasūya* is in some ways a combination of potlatch and gift-exchange. On the announcement of the *rājasūya*, various tribes and peoples bring their gifts, the nature of the gift indicating a status of equality or subordination. Another method of ranking the gift-bearers is whether or not they are admitted to the ceremony in the first round, some having to enhance their gifts before admission.[7] The ranking showed whether the gift was to be treated as political tribute, although the nature of the *rājasūya* being what it was, the assumption was that all gifts were tribute and are therefore referred to as *bali*. The elaborate ceremonies required of the *rājasūya* ritual were a means of distributing the accumulated wealth. After Yudhiṣṭhira had successfully completed the *rājasūya* in spite of the crisis over the status of Kṛṣṇa, Duryodhana as a matter of rivalry wished also to perform a *rājasūya*. However, he was discouraged from doing so and it was suggested that he substitute a Vaiṣṇava sacrifice for the *rājasūya*.[8] Was this perhaps to avoid a rival potlatch which would have meant a rapid consumption of wealth quite apart from the sharp and immediate tension among the kinsmen and the clan chiefs? The Vaiṣṇava sacrifice was clearly a lesser known rite and consequently its rewards were not widely publicised. To give it status it was said that it had previously only been performed by Viṣṇu himself.

Held has pointed out that there is a link between the *rājasūya* ritual and the game of dice since the latter is one of the ceremonies in the sacrifice.[9] The importance which the game of dice takes on in the epic makes it a substitute for the rival *rājasūya* as potlatch: the end result of which is to divest the Pāṇḍavas of their wealth and that too of their own volition. Dicing certainly carries non-heroic undertones, for the kingdoms of heroes should be lost in battle and combat and not at the throw of dice. Yet neither with the Pāṇḍavas nor with the story of Nala[10] is any condemnation attached to the losing of wealth, territory and family in gambling. Perhaps the cosmological parallels of dicing with ritual and fate (as for example in the names used for the game and the throws) exonerated the heroes.[11] A more immediate association could be with the distribution of grazing land which often required the drawing of lots or the throwing of dice. Thus the throwing of dice could have symbolised the distribution of wealth.[12] Curiously, winning at dice would have made the Kauravas the legitimate heirs and the epic could well have terminated at this point. But the interposing of other claims, some even negative such as the blindness of Dhṛtarāṣṭra disqualifying him from succession, introduces new concerns of legitimacy and the story continues.

If potlatch and gift-exchange involve concepts of wealth it would be worth examining the tangibles which are included in the definition of wealth. In the geographical sections of the Bhīṣma-parvan where Bhāratavarṣa is being described, the rich areas are said to possess gems, metals and fruit-bearing trees.[13] More specific descriptions of wealth are available elsewhere, as for example in the details of the items brought by various peoples as tribute to Yudhiṣṭhira.[14] These may best be tabulated as follows:

Source	*Items*
Kāmboja	Fleeces of sheep, gold-embroidered fur, deerskin jackets, 300 horses, camels, varieties of nuts
Govāsana Dāsanīya	Golden jars
Bhārukaccha	100,000 slave-girls from Kārpāsika, deer hides, horses
Vairāma Pārada Kitava	Goats, sheep, cows, donkeys, camels, gems, gold, blankets
Bhāgadatta	Horses, jade vases, swords with ivory carved hilts, gold

Barbarians	Silver, horses
Chinese Hūṇas Śakas Oḍas, etc.	Textiles, wool, deer-hides, silk, cotton, skins, thousands of asses, swords, spears, lances, battle-axes, gems, perfumes and wine
Tukhāra Kaṅka Romaśas Śṛṅgiṇonarāḥ	Many thousand horses, gold, palaquins, beds and chariots, gems, javelins, iron arrows and shafts
Khaśas Ekāśanas Jyohas Pradaras Dīrghaveṇu Paśupas Kuṇindas Taṅgana	Gold produced by Pipīlaka ants,[15] yak-tail plumes, honey and herbs
Mountain tribes: Vāriṣenā Lohitya	Sandalwood, aloeswood, hides, gems, gold, perfumes, rare birds and slave-girls
Vaṅga Kaliṅga Tāmralipta Puṇḍraka	Dukūla cloth, silk, cloaks and elephants
Gandharva	500 Horses and gold harness
Śūkara	Hundreds of elephants
Virāṭa	2000 elephants
Pāṁśu	26 elephants and 2000 horses in gold trappings
Yajñasena	14,000 slave-girls, 10,000 slaves with their wives, 26 elephants
Siṁhalas	Elephant trappings, pearls, beryls and conches.

And also a long list of other peoples who brought unspecified wealth.

From this list it would seem that the major wealth consisted of gold, horses, elephants, slaves and textiles. The first three items could come from relatively less complex societies such as livestock breeders and trappers, unless as in the case of the Śūdras of Bhārukaccha the items were imported from elsewhere. Slaves could indicate societies with some stratification unless they were mainly captives as in the case of the mountain tribes. In any case the numbers of slaves may well have been exaggerated. From societies with a greater specialisation of labour and craft production the expectation would be the inclusion of more items as finished products showing the expertise in the craft: thus, varieties of woollen material rather than fleeces of sheep, finely worked objects of gold rather than mere gold, jewellery rather than gems. The list of tributes is more suggestive of tribal chiefships rather than areas of commodity production. The variety of the textiles and weaponry coming from central Asia however indicates something of the latter. There is a surprising absence of any reference to high-quality grain which in small quantities would not have been difficult to transport. Possibly the notion of tribute was more attuned to raw materials than to finished products.

Another definition of what constituted wealth can be culled from the sequences in the game of dice in which Yudhiṣṭhira stakes his wealth.[16] This consists of pearls set in gold, a hundred jars each full of a hundred gold pieces, a special chariot and eight steeds, a thousand elephants with eight cow-elephants each, a hundred thousand slave girls and a hundred-thousand men slaves who fed and entertained the guests, a hundred-thousand chariots and warriors, Gandharva horses, sixty-thousand broad-chested men selected from each *varṇa* and fed on rice and grain and milk, four hundred coffers of gold, cattle, horses, cows, sheep and goats. When he has lost all this wealth he then stakes his city (*pura*), territory (*janapada*) and the wealth of all his people barring the *brāhmaṇas* and ultimately himself and the family. Here again the emphasis is on gold, animals and slaves. Those clearly mentioned as slaves are domestic slaves working in the household and are not slaves used in herding or agricultural activities. This is an important distinction. The sixty thousand broad-chested men are puzzling. They are associated with rice and grain and draught animals so they could be cultivators. If so, why would they be specially selected from each *varṇa*? Had they been slaves working in the fields or with the herds they would have been described as such by the use of the word *dāsa* or *bhṛtya*. They are not described as soldiers nor as warriors. They appear to be a specially selected body of retainers. In the computing of his wealth Yudhiṣṭhira makes no mention of any private land owned by him or his family. His staking of the wealth of his people is in a sense a rhetorical way of staking his right to rule.

The importance of livestock to the concept of wealth is further demonstrated in the description of the city of Girivraja which is said to be rich in cattle, always flowing with water and with fine houses.[17] It is almost as if livestock had become synonymous with wealth. In the alternative sacrifice of the Vaiṣṇava which Duryodhana is encouraged to perform, the main rituals consist of a large feast (which is characteristic of a potlatch) subsequent to the central rite of ploughing the land with a golden plough, the latter being made out of the tribute brought by various peoples to the ceremony. There is no mistaking the agricultural emphasis of this ceremony, yet it is regarded at best as a substitute for the better known *rājasūya*.

The objects brought are seen either as gifts or as tribute and not as taxes, whether they come from close neighbours or distant people. The term used in most cases is *bali*, even for the gifts from the central Asians. *Bali*, therefore, did not imply any regular tax as in later periods. The gifts were occasional and symbols of goodwill and were eventually to be distributed as part of the largesse associated with the ritual. Even the listing of these gifts as tribute was the momentary vision of the heroes and their bards. The bringing in of gifts does not appear to take the form of any regular trade, else mention would have been made of traders accompanying the gifts. There is also a noticeable absence of reference to coins in the listing of wealth. An itinerant or peddling trade must certainly have been a common feature with probably a series of sporadic markets dependent on availability of produce.

Passages containing lists of tribute-bearers would be among those to which in epic style additions could be made quite easily. Thus as the geographical and economic reach widened fresh names and items could be added on. It has been argued that the inclusion of the central Asians in this list would date this passage to the second century BC.[18] The names and the items may well have been added at this period or possibly even somewhat later, but the structure of the relationships implied belongs to an earlier period. The items listed as coming from these areas may well have been the cargo of the regular trade between north India and central Asia in the post-Mauryan period. What is significant is that they are not mentioned as trading cargo but as tribute for a specific occasion. Poetic fancy apart, many of the items listed as tribute were probably familiar to the trading network of the late first millennium BC and the early centuries AD yet the trading network is kept out of this section of the text. During the Mauryan and post-Mauryan period there were exchanges of royal envoys bearing gifts between Indian rulers and those of west Asia and the Mediterranean. The items included as gifts—rare species of fauna, special varieties of food or fruit, objects of craft specialisation—are very different from the items listed in the epic.[19]

Some of the items from the latter are the natural produce of the forests such as fragrant wood, honey, herbs, furs, and deerskins. These are valued both in themselves and because forest produce was appreciated by the host society. Association with the forest is indicated by other features as well. Although life in the forest is contrasted with that of the court, the physical entity of the forest was not clearly demarcated or segregated.[20] It was land beyond the village and evidently not much acreage had been cleared for fields since forests seem to have been easily accessible to village dwellers. Forests were often regarded as sacred groves and said to be protected by supernatural beings both kindly and malevolent. The Saugandhika-vana was protected by Kubera, the king of the Yakṣas, and the Hiḍimba-vana was the haunt of the *rākṣasa* Hiḍimba.[21] These were substantial forests and not just a small clump of trees. The heroes could walk for some distance before meeting the protector and the uprooting of trees was common during the conflicts which sometimes occurred within the forest. The association of deities or demons with the forest was an archaic practice which survived into the ritual of the sacred grove.

The Khāṇḍava-vana was protected by Indra, and Agni had to appeal to Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna for assistance before the forest could be destroyed. The burning of the Khāṇḍava-vana is a vast conflagration involving a large area. It has been suggested that this event refers to the burning of forests to clear land for agriculture.[22] The burning of a forest is indicative of the early stages of an agrarian economy when population groups are relatively small and can survive on this low yielding method of clearing land. In the case of the Khāṇḍava-vana it may be argued that, although there was a familiarity with the more advanced plough agriculture, a primitive method of clearing land was used because of the extent of the area which had to be cleared, an area large enough for the Pāṇḍavas and their followers to establish the hub of a *janapada*.

In Vedic literature the *araṇya* often symbolises that which is alien as compared to the *grāma*.[23] In the *Mahābhārata* however the purity and the sanctity of the forest receives greater emphasis. The theme of exile in the forest is also a theme of penance and purification for ultimately the forest is not only the sacred grove but also the natural habitat of the ascetic and the location of the hermitage. The forest is not an alien place. The gathering economy imposed by life in the forest was regarded as an almost ideal way of living in its self-sufficiency. Even if the forest was introduced as a deliberate literary device in order to contrast it with life at the court, the idealisation of the forest reflects a relatively familiar way of life. It could be argued that the mere fact of idealisation indicates a changed environment in which the forest is an archaic symbol. However, the inter-linking of the forest with pasture lands would suggest the continuing economic function of the forest.

The pastoral economy finds repeated reference both directly and indirectly. Some pasture lands are included in forest areas such as the Dvaitavana, and the Kauravas organise a *ghoṣayātrā*, a cattle expedition to this area.[24] Karṇa suggests that he and Duryodhana should take permission from Dhṛtarāṣṭra and go on an expedition to visit the cowherding stations in Dvaitavana. Karṇa, spoiling for a fight, knew that the Pāṇḍavas were in the vicinity and therefore trouble might ensue. The cattle expedition was obviously a recognised procedure since the *ghoṣayātrā* is the time for counting the cows and branding the calves and incidentally the forest also provides the occasion for hunting. A vast expedition sets out consisting of the scions of the clan and their friends and retainers, an army of eight thousand chariots, thirty thousand elephants, one thousand soldiers and nine thousand horses, together with many hundreds of hunters and womenfolk. It is specifically mentioned that traders also follow in their wake suggesting the organisation of temporary cattle fairs. That the permission of the king had to be obtained and that the young men were personally involved in supervising the expedition indicates that it had an important function in the economy and also suggests that the Kurus were more in the nature of chiefs rather than well-entrenched monarchs. That the *ghoṣayātrā* also carries an element of the potlatch is evident from the numbers listed and the distribution of presents and gifts to the cattle-herders by the princes. The battle between the Kauravas and the Gandharvas[25] on this occasion is doubtless a parallel to the cattle raids which must have occurred as part of these expeditions. Rights over grazing lands and hunting lands would be territorial rights the infringement of which would be opposed as strongly as the infringement of cultivated fields in later stages. What mattered in the former situation was the prohibition on trespass rather than on the fear of being dislodged from the land. It was the trespass on the part of the Kauravas which the Gandharvas were opposing.

Meat-eating as a regular part of the diet would reinforce the dependence on hunting and pastoralism. Thus the Pāṇḍavas hunt deer to feed themselves and the *brāhmaṇas* who had followed them into the Kāmyaka forest.[26] Draupadī offers a meal of fifty deer together with rabbit, boar and buffalo meat to the kings of Sindhu and Suvīra.[27] It was not only in the privation of forest life that meat was eaten. Even in the didactic sections the practice cannot be condemned out of hand. It is said that under the constellation of Rohiṇī one should gift meat, rice, *ghi*, milk, etc., to *brāhmaṇas*.[28] Although there is a plea in support of *ahiṃsā* and therefore an attack on the eating of animal flesh, nevertheless it is said that meat if sanctified in accordance with the *Vedas*, can be eaten since animals were created for the sacrifice.[29] A list of food items for *śrāddha* is given arranged in increasing proportions of gratification to the *pitṛs*—fish, mutton, hare's flesh, goat, pork, fowl, venison, buffalo, cow, *pāyasam*, and rhinoceros meat.[30] The rewards for performing the *śrāddhas* are also listed and among these are the obtaining of beautiful wives and children, horses, cattle and other animals, silver and gold, profits in trade, splendour and fame. Curiously land does not figure in the list of wealth and rewards.

In another part of the epic there is a discussion of the places to which pilgrimages should be made.[31] There follows a list of rewards which a person acquires on making such pilgrimages. Most of the rewards are, not surprisingly, intangible, such as going to the worlds of various deities—Soma, Sūrya, Mitra, Viṣṇu, Manu Prajāpati, Varuṇa, Brahmā, Śakra, etc. Others are equivalence rewards, where a particular pilgrimage has the same merit as the performance of a sacrifice such as the *agniṣṭoma*, *aśvamedha*, *rājasūya*, etc. Such equivalences were perhaps necessary when geographical mobility improved and cult deities had to be accommodated into religious ritual. As far as the more tangible rewards are concerned they relate mainly to the acquisition of cows and gold and to longevity.

References to agriculture and agricultural processes are relatively infrequent in the narrative sections of the text. In one passage we are told that the peasant ploughs, sows and then waits for the rain to fall. Should the rain fail there is nothing that the peasant can do.[32] The lack of mention of any methods of irrigation connected with agriculture is surprising. Elsewhere there is a specific mention of the need for keeping a sufficient number of tanks full of water in case of drought affecting the harvest, and in times of scarcity providing the farmer with a loan.[33] This latter passage is from a section in which Nārada is defining a well-run state and it would appear to be a didactic section on statecraft. A well-established agrarian economy would compute wealth in terms of fields and grain apart from other items such as animal livestock and gold. There would be references to methods of irrigation to supplement years of poor rainfall. It would also reflect some differentiation in land ownership and among those working on the land. The *Rāmāyaṇa* has many passages referring to the agricultural wealth of Ayodhyā, Kosala and Mithilā, and where the definition of wealth itself refers to grain, orchards and ponds full of water.[34] The early Buddhist literature also includes cultivated fields and grain as wealth and describes methods of irrigation.[35] It also draws a distinction between the owners of land and the cultivators of land where the latter include independent cultivators, hired labourers and slaves. The category of *dāsabhṛtaka* is mentioned both in the context of the household as well as in agricultural work.

Slaves referred to in the *Mahābhārata* are generally said to have been those captured in war or those reduced to slavery as a result of loss in gambling or those born as such from slave mothers. The overwhelming number appears to have been domestic slaves used for running the household or more often entertaining guests. These are the slaves mentioned in large numbers without name or identification. Those reduced to slavery through gambling or loss of a bet are mentioned by name, as in the story of Kadrū and Vinatā or Devayānī and Śārmiṣṭhā.[36] Some seem to serve joint masters such as the couple Gaṇḍā and Paśusakha serving the seven *ṛṣis*.[37] Slaves given as part of a gift or tribute on special occasions are often described in exaggerated figures. Thus Yudhiṣṭhira boasts of a hundred thousand slave girls and the same number of slave men, all employed in entertaining his guests.[38] It is unlikely that he would have had resources sufficient to maintain them. Slaves as tribute are only listed a couple of times and the fact that there were more slave girls than men would emphasise the use of slaves in domestic functions rather than slavery for production whether in agriculture or in mines. The slaves given with their wives may have been used to clear land and bring it under cultivation. However, the use of slaves in this capacity is not alluded to. Even Yudhisthira when staking his wealth, item by item, does not mention any slaves used on the land. Cultivation was probably still under the control of the clan and the internal stratification within the clan would demarcate the categories with some use of *śūdra* labour. One of the occasions when a distinction is made between the *dāsa* and the *rājanya* is at the *rājasūya* of Yudhiṣṭhira when the Cedi king accuses Kṛṣṇa of being the former and not the latter.[39] But the identification of Kṛṣṇa with his clan is not in doubt. The incidence of debt bondage involving land seems rare, the main forms of recruitment to slavery being by capture or by birth. The intensification of agriculture with the use of slaves appears to have been absent. The terms *dāsa*, *karmakāra* and *bhṛtya* are used as a phrase in one part of the text but in a general sense without specifying the functions of these categories.[40] The context suggests 'dependents' rather than any specific function.

By and large the general hesitancy to store wealth and the constant urging that it be distributed would result in an absence of the kind of surplus associated with intensive agriculture, long-established monarchical systems and professional priests entirely dependent on the community for a living. But this picture begins to give way to a changed economic situation. The gradual change from a pastoral-cum-agricultural economy to one more intensively dependent on land is perhaps most clearly seen in the pattern of gift-giving classified as *dāna*. The pattern is recognisable from a wider range of sources and has been analysed elsewhere,[41] but it becomes apparent even within the confines of a single text. Two features are particularly noticeable. One is that the material content of *dāna* changes from livestock wealth and gold to land. The second is that the emphasis shifts from wide scale distribution of wealth to the bestowal of wealth on deserving *brāhmaṇas* alone. This may be linked with the growth of professional priests, a body of people exclusively concerned with religion and religious ritual who have little means of support other than *dāna*. Even their professional fees are preferentially described as a form of gift-giving than as wages.

The distribution of wealth during the *rājasūya* of Yudhiṣṭhira took the form of feeding the many millions present at the ceremony, of a generous giving of alms, the supporting of eighty-eight thousand *snātakas* each with thirty maidservants and the feeding off gold plate of ten thousand ascetics.[42] In contrast to this, in a later part of the epic, the distribution of wealth is strictly limited to deserving *brāhmaṇas*. The duty of the king is to recite the *Vedas*, acquire wealth and with this wealth perform sacrifices, since wealth is created for the performance of sacrifices and must be given only to those who are deserving of it.[43] This is a modification on the emphasis on the act of giving with a stress on the legitimacy of the person to whom the gift is made.

Not only is the deserving *brāhmaṇa* now the sole recipient of *dāna* but the amount of *dāna* to be given to him also increases enormously. At the inauguration of the *sabhā* of the Asura Māyā, Yudhiṣṭhira gave to each of the ten thousand *brāhmaṇas* present a sumptuous meal, a new set of clothes and a thousand cows.[44] The Pāṇḍavas performed the sacred rites at the *tīrtha* on the Gomatī and gave cows and wealth to the *brāhmaṇas*.[45] For the attainment of various heavens the gift of a cow or an ox was necessary.[46] But in the Śāntiparvan and the Anuśāsana-parvan various kings are eulogised for their generosity and the figures mentioned are quite staggering. Thus, Bhāgīrathi gave a million women covered with gold ornaments, the same number of chariots each with four horses, a hundred elephants, a thousand horses, a thousand head of cattle and a thousand goats and sheep.[47] Śaśabindu bestowed on the *brāhmaṇas* at his *aśvamedha*, a hundred elephants, ten thousand chariots, one million horses, a hundred million cattle and ten billion sheep and goats.[48] Gaya performed the *aśvamedha* and donated a hundred thousand cattle, many hundreds of mules and covered an area of a hundred cubits by fifty cubits with gold which gold was then given in *dāna*. Sagara gave mansions with golden columns and golden beds and beautiful women.[49] *Dāna* was efficacious not only in ensuring heaven but also in cleansing one of sins. Thus a hundred thousand cows compensated for a *brahmahatyā* and twenty-five thousand Kapilā cows in calf or a hundred Kāmboja horses would cleanse one of all sins.[50] The excessively large figures need not be taken literally. They appear to be stereotypes in the definition of great wealth. What is significant is the increase in the numbers and the constant listing of animal wealth, female slaves and gold. There was also the added emphasis on the appropriateness of the occasion—*śrāddhas* or *yajñas*—when the gift was to be made.

The gradual but growing importance of agriculture becomes more apparent from a late part of the text where a new type of *dāna* is mentioned, that of donating a tank.[51] It is stated that such a gift merits respect in all three worlds and pleases the gods. The construction of tanks containing water at different times of the year is said to be as meritorious as the performing of sacrifices such as the *agnihotra*, *agniṣṭoma*, *atirātra*, and *aśvamedha*, and some are also equivalent to a *dāna* of kine or gold. Associated with the gifting of tanks and water is the merit of planting trees, indicating an increase of agriculture on cleared land with a concern for the availability of water for irrigation during the different seasons. The ideal tank is one in which the water fills during the rains and remains available throughout the year. The intrusion of this type of *dāna* may well be a later interpolation in the text. If this is so then it is more likely to have been an interpolation from areas requiring the use of tanks. It is curious that the building of wells or of *bunds*, both common sources of water supply, are not listed in this important category of donation.

Ultimately there is a section eulogising the gifting of land in which *pṛthividāna* is described as the best form of *dāna*.[52] It is equivalent to all other gifts of tanks, trees and sacrifices. The rewards are multiple: a heaven full of *apsarās*, rebirth as a king and the transcending of all sins. Further, there is an explanation for why land is so superior as a gift. Land is immovable and indestructible, its value is enhanced each time there is a crop (therefore cultivable land is preferable) and it can yield other kinds of wealth such as grain, the nurturing of animals and possibly mineral wealth. It is repeatedly said that only the *kṣatriya* can gift land.

Significantly the gifting of land is included in the didactic section of the text suggestive of the custom being relatively recent and requiring strong moral and religious sanction. That the *kṣatriya* alone could donate land might indicate that the period was one when the *kṣatriyas* were landowners by virtue of being members of landowning clans. The donation of land by the individual king points to the emergence of the king's rights over land although there is scant evidence of land having become a saleable commodity. Even in the gifting of land the element of potlatch is by no means absent as is clear from the following verse:[53]

> *māmevādatta māṁ datta māṁ dattvā mām avāpsyatha/asmiṅlloke pare caiva*
> *tataścājanane punaḥ//*

Notes and References

* Published in *ABORI*, 1977–78, LIX, 993–1007, pp. 993–1007. Copyright © 1978 by The Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute. Used with permission.

1. I am using the terms 'narrative' and 'didactic' as defined by V.S. Sukthankar in *On the Meaning of the Māhabhārata*, Bombay, 1957.
2. Moti Chandra, *Geographical and Economic Studies in the Māhabhārata*, Lucknow, 1945.
3. Marcel Mauss, *Essai sur le don, forme archaïque de l'echange*, Paris, 1925; translated into English, *The Gift*, London, 1954.

4. G.J. Held, *The Māhabhārata: An Ethnological Study*, London, 1935.
5. Philip Drucker, *Cultures of the North Pacific Coast*, New York, 1965, pp. 55–66. In G. Dalton (ed.), *Tribal and Peasant Economies*, New York, 1967, pp. 481–93.
6. Mauss, *Essai sur le don, forme archaïque de l'echange.*
7. II.47.5.
8. III.241.27–34.
9. Held, *The Māhabhārata*, pp. 74ff.
10. III.56.5–18.
11. Held, *The Māhabhārata*, pp. 243ff
12. Graziers in Tibet until very recently settled the divisions of grazing grounds by a throw of dice, the highest throw enabling the grazier to choose his area for a period of three years. Charles Bell, *The People of Tibet*, Oxford, 1968, pp. 49ff.
13. VI.7–13.
14. II.47 and 48.
15. The reference to ants is reminiscent of Herodotus and other classical writers who mention the 'gold digging ants' of India's northern border. Herodotus, III.102–26; Strabo, XV.1.37; Arrian, *Indica*, XV.6. The items listed in this group seem almost certainly to have come from the high northern borders en route to Tibet from where yak-tails were obtained even in later periods.
16. II.53.22–5; 54.1–29; 58.1–43.
17. II.19.1. The most admirable piece of architecture by far in the entire epic is the palace of the Pāṇḍavas which curiously is built by an *asura*, Māyā, helped by the Kiṁkara Rākṣasas, or through *asura māyā*. The palace carries a greater aura of magic than of reality. J.A.B. van Buitenen, *The Mahābhārata*, Chicago, 1975, vol. 11, pp. 6–9.
18. Chandra, *Geographical and Economic Studies*, p. 30.
19. For the exchange of items through envoys during the Mauryan period, Romila Thapar, *Aśoka and the Decline of the Mauryas*, Oxford, 1961, pp. 17–18. E.H. Warmington, *The Commerce Between the Roman Empire and India*, Delhi, 1974, pp. 261–72, lists the items which were exported from the Mediterranean and west Asia to India in the Mauryan and post-Mauryan period. These include slave girls (in small numbers), horses, red coral, flaxen clothing, papyrus, storax, clover, dates, frankinsence, lead, copper, tin, antimony, realger, vases and lamps, silver vessels, amber and glass objects. Very few of these items feature in the tribute brought to the *rājasūya*.
20. van Buitenen, *The Mahābhārata*, p. 175.
21. III.151.lff; 152.3.
22. D.D. Kosambi, *The Culture and Civilisation of Ancient India in Historical Outline*, London, 1965, p. 117.

23. C. Malamoud, 'Landscape and Religion in the *Arthaśāstra*. A Note on Bhūmicchidra'. Paper read at the I.C.O. Mexico, 1976.
24. III.227.19 to 229.10.
25. III.230.1–31.
26. III.47.1–12.
27. III.251.11–12.
28. XIII.63.6ff.
29. XIII. 116 and 117.13–14.
30. XIII.88.
31. III.80–9.
32. III.33.44–5.
33. II.5.67–8.
34. Dev Raj Chanana, *The Spread of Agriculture in Northern India*, New Delhi, 1963, pp. 6–8. *Rāmāyaṇa*, II.6.11ff.
35. *Cullavagga*, V.17.2; VII. 1.2; *Vinaya Piṭaka*, I.287 are some of the references to irrigation for fields. *Mahāvagga*, III.11.4; *Jātaka*, III.293; IV.276, 281 refer to categories of ownership and the use of *dāsa* and *karmakāras* on the land.
36. I.14.5ff and I.73.
37. XIII.94.5.
38. II.54.12.
39. II.42.1–4.
40. V.132.17.
41. Romila Thapar, '*Dāna* and *Dakṣiṇā* as Forms of Exchange', *Indica*, vol. 13, 1976, nos 1 and 2, pp. 37–48. *See* chapter 3 in this volume.
42. II.48.35–42.
43. XII.20.10.
44. II.4.2–3.
45. III.93.1–3.
46. III.184.7–11.
47. XII.29.56ff.
48. XII.29.56ff.
49. XII.2.9.122–6.
50. XIII.24.lff.
51. XIII.99.lff.
52. XIII.61.2ff.
53. XIII.61.32.

3

Dāna *and* Dakṣiṇā *as Forms of Exchange**

In the study of the society and economy of ancient India information has often to be ferreted out from seemingly unlikely sources. What is often associated with apparently non-economic activity such as religious rituals, can sometimes provide insights into social and economic concerns. It is intended in this paper to examine the custom of *dāna*, the act of giving, in its major forms, from this point of view. The earliest literary sources refer to the giving of *dāna*, *dakṣiṇā*, etc. to priests and *brāhmaṇas*. The occasions for making these gifts are mentioned and there is generally an itemization of the objects considered appropriate for each occasion. Gradually gift-giving ceased to be something arbitrary and became systemised. This is evident from the discussion in some of the *smṛti* literature on the elements and aspects involved in the concept of *dāna*. Reference is made to six distinct elements and these include the *dātā* (donor), the *pratigrahītā* (recipient), *śraddhā*, the appropriateness of the gift, and the place and the time, for making the gift.[1] Gift-giving gradually evolved its own rules and requirements and can therefore be examined as an important aspect of the social and economic life of the early period.

Gift-giving has been seen largely in the context of its association with religious ritual and symbolism. There are however at least two other aspects which will be explored in this paper. Firstly, there is the obvious one of the changing items included in the listing of *dāna* and the correlation of these items with economic change. Secondly, the degree to which the nature of gift-giving reflects the socio-economic structure of the society: this hinges on the question of whether *dāna* and *dakṣiṇā* can be regarded as forms of gift-exchange and, if so, at what point do they cease to perform this function. Needless to say, gift-giving in this connection refers to major gifts given on particular and special occasions and not to the daily or routine ritual of small-scale *dāna*.

In the Vedic texts the two more commonly used words for gift-giving are *dāna* and *dakṣiṇā*. The two words are by no means synonymous. The first is the generic word for gift with its etymological root in √*dā*, to give. *Dāna* therefore refers to the act of giving, bestowing, granting, yielding and prestation, irrespective of what is being given and when. *Dakṣiṇā* has a more specific connotation although its meaning remains a little ambiguous. It is a gift by extension of its meaning. The etymon refers to the right side, the side of purity and of respect. It also carries the meaning of invigorating or strengthening the sacrifice for which purpose the gift is made to the performer of the sacrifice.[2] By extension therefore it came to mean either a gift or a donation made to a priest or a sacrificial fee.[3] The *dakṣiṇā* to the gods can be symbolic but that to the priests must consist of actual objects. It has been argued that the *dakṣiṇā* was never a salary or a sacrificial fee, but has to be seen as part of the economic system of Vedic times, that of gift-exchange.[4] It is possible to argue that it was not a sacrificial fee to begin with but came to be regarded as such by the time of the *Manu Dharmaśāstra* when gift-exchange was no longer an important aspect of the economic system.[5]

The concept of gift-exchange (particularly with reference to early Indian texts) was formulated at length by Marcel Mauss in his now well-known work, *The Gift*. Mauss argued that the earliest forms of exchange were those of total prestation between clan and clan and family and family. Subsequent to this stage comes that of gift-exchange in which certain categories of people are involved in almost ritualised exchanges which are embedded in the larger continuum of social and economic relations.[6] This stage precedes the change to individual contract and the money-market with fixed price and weighed and coined money. Gift-exchange would therefore tend to become less embedded in those primarily agricultural societies which experienced the gradual impinging of changing attitudes to land and the ownership of land and where land slowly emerges as the major economic unit. Literary sources which relate both to societies with a base in primitive agriculture and to societies with more complex social stratification based on advanced plough agriculture would reflect this change.

Mauss maintains that gift-exchange is not arbitrary but is based on the notion of value. What is exchanged is a token of wealth and this is different from money as it is imbued with a magical power. It is not an impersonal gift as it is linked to an individual or a particular group. Thus utility alone is not the motivating force in this exchange. The accepted token of wealth is significant since wealth is a demonstration of status; it is a means of controlling others by winning followers and by placing those who accept the gift under obligation. The exchange is essentially of consumable items and luxuries—food and clothing for example. The gift is not one-sided and implies a return gift, although the return of the actual gift presented was forbidden. The symbolic motivation in making the gift was the belief that it is reproductive and that the donor would receive the same in larger quantity. More recent studies of the system of gift-exchange have pointed to the functional aspect as well. The system of gift-exchange kept goods and people in circulation in a particular pattern and also acted as a means of maintaining political relationships and ranking.[7]

The earliest references to *dāna* as a distinct function in society come from the *dāna-stuti* hymns of the *Ṛg Veda*, hymns in praise of those who make generous and handsome gifts.[8] The subject of these particular hymns is either the donor or the event which occasioned the gift. Thus in one of the hymns Kaśu, the Cedi king is honoured and in another the victory at Hariyūpīyā.[9] The *dātā* (donor) can be a deity—primarily Indra and occasionally Soma, with Aśvins, Viśvadevas and Sarasvatī also included—but is frequently a king/chief or hero. The *pratigrahītā* (recipients) are the hymnodists, the priests or the bards who have composed the verses in praise of the person or the event. The gift comes from human hands but sometimes via the mediation of a god.[10] Thus the god is requested for favours and if these are granted then the kings bestow gifts on the priests who immortalize them in verse.[11] The event is generally a successful battle or cattle raid or victory over the enemy or the destruction of the enemy. In these the role of Indra is pre-eminent: he destroys the forts of the enemy, he attacks the Dāsas jointly and individually.[12] The gift is made therefore not so much in the spirit of charity but as symbolic of success and as an investment towards further success on future occasions. The appropriateness of the gift is exalted but the time and place are rarely mentioned. The association with Soma may imply that it was made on the occasion of the soma-pressing ceremony. Evidently the purpose of *dāna* in the Ṛgvedic age was different from what it was to become in later times.

The *dāna-stutis* have a fairly uniform format. The composer's *gotra* is usually mentioned early on so that his social bona fides are established. The deity is invoked, the exploits of the deity are lauded and an appeal is made to the deity for aid. Frequently, parallel situations are described which in the past had a successful outcome and were followed by generous gift-giving. Reference is made to the giving of gifts by human heroes. The gifts are unambiguously objects of wealth and are recorded in what can only be, on many occasions, exaggerated figures. The most prized gift and object of wealth is cattle with figures ranging from a hundred cows to sixty thousand head of cattle.[13] Horses come next in priority and although smaller numbers are listed they are often described in greater detail than the cows. Ten horses is a common figure although thousands of steed are also mentioned and, in one case, sixty thousand.[14] There is a preference for stallions over mares, whereas in bovine wealth the preference is for cows. Other gifts include wagons, chariots, maidens, camels, treasure-chests, garments and robes, measures of gold and, infrequently, cauldrons of metal.[15] Perhaps the epitome of the *dāna-stutis* is the paean to *dakṣiṇā* itself where the liberal bestowers of *dakṣiṇā*, the *yajamānas* are described as immortals inhabiting the highest heaven, secure from harm, victorious in battle and living with their brides in eternal bliss—the vision of a hero's paradise.[16]

The *dāna-stuti* hymns are expressions of heroic poetry. The givers of *dāna* are the heroes of the clan, sometimes equated with the larger body, often carrying its name in place of the individual name. The listing of the wealth was an indication of status, for those who gave large gifts such as Kaśu the Cedi king, Divodāsa, Pṛthuśravas or the Yādavas were acknowledged as being more powerful and wealthy than those who made lesser gifts such as Asaṅga or Saṇḍa. The gifts were functional items of wealth and not tokens of wealth. In this case, what was probably the implicit token was not the actual item but the exaggerated quantities in some of the figures.

Among the gifts there is a noticeable absence of the mention of land and, quite evidently, as has been pointed out, it was cattle that was synonymous with wealth.[17] This is also evident from the frequency of words and phrases incorporating cattle as synonyms for other aspects of material life, as for example in the extended meaning of words such as *gaviṣṭhi*, *gopati* or *gomat*. Even grain is rarely listed as an item of *dāna*. This is indicative of the relative unimportance of land as economic wealth.

It has been argued that the Ṛgvedic evidence suggests that the king was essentially a protector of cattle and not of land; consequently it is cattle which is a source of inter-tribal conflict and not land.[18] This may well indicate that land was owned jointly by the clan and, furthermore, despite the references to agricultural activities scattered throughout the *Ṛg Veda*, land was still seen in essence as territory encompassing both fields and grazing ground. The lifting of cattle was a more serious economic problem than trespassing into fields. The Panis are feared for they are both rich in cattle as well as being stealers of cattle. Wealth (*rayi*) was computed primarily in cattle.[19] It is also of some interest that male slaves are rarely mentioned as constituting *dāna*, whereas *dāsīs*, if understood as being female slaves, were known. This would suggest that perhaps domestic slavery as a source of luxury among the wealthy was evident but the use of slavery in economic production was not the prevalent system.[20] That the possible clan ownership of land continued awhile is reflected in the story of the king Viśvakarman Bhauvana who is rebuked by the earth when he tries to gift the earth he has conquered through his *aśvamedha* to Kaśyapa.[21] But other sections of the Later Vedic literature include land as part of the recognised *dāna*.

The purpose of extensive gift-making in early societies is threefold. Ostensibly it serves a magico-religious function where the gift is symbolic of communion with the supernatural. In effect it also has two other less evident functions: one is that the donor and the recipient confer status on each other, although the source of the respective status may be different in each case, and secondly gift-giving acts as a means of exchanging and redistributing economic wealth.

In the *dāna-stutis* of the *Ṛg Veda* the two groups involved in conferring status on each other are the *brāhmaṇas* and *rājanyas/kṣatriyas*. The former mediate with the gods on behalf of the latter and ensure success in battle and cattle-raids, which success invests the latter with power and political status. The latter bestow wealth on the priests, thus providing them with their major source of income as well as conceding to them charismatic powers inherent in the process of ensuring success. By the time of the composition of these hymns a limited social group was involved in the exchange. However, the existence of a more extensive exchange can be postulated for an earlier phase.[22] A successful battle or cattle-raid resulted in an enforced acquisition of wealth on the part of the victorious tribe.

The process of gift-exchange was however more equitable if it occurred through the performance of the *yajña*, which in turn may be seen as a variant on the potlatch. As far as the redistribution of wealth was concerned, even at the *yajña* it seems by now to have been limited to the same two social groups, the *kṣatriya* and the *brāhmaṇa*. Thus, wealth acquired through the labour of the *viś*, whether in war or in peace, was channelled via the *rājā* to the priests either through *dāna* or through the *dakṣiṇā* at the *yajña*. In earlier periods, when it is presumed that the tribe participated in the *yajña*, some of the wealth may have been redistributed among a wider group. But, by the time of the composition of the *Ṛg Veda*, both the redistribution as well as the participation of the clan in the *yajña* was more limited.

In such a situation there must have been a distinction between those who were the possessors of wealth and the rest of the tribe. Was this distinction expressed in the term *ārya* which Bailey has analyzed in considerable detail and which analysis leads him to state that *ārya* referred to the owner or possessor of wealth?[23] This is also suggested in the *Nighaṇṭu* which equates *ārya* with *īśvara* (owner/master) and in Pāṇini, who explains it by the phrase *aryaḥsvāmi-vaiśyayoḥ*.[24] The *āryas* as possessors of wealth were gradually distinguished from the *viś*, the rest of the tribe, who by then were no longer equal partners in joint wealth. As Bailey states, the association of wealth and ownership suggests nobility of class and not an ethnic group. The significance of birth into the *ārya-varṇa* relates an *ārya* to social status and wealth and not to race.

The literature of the Later Vedic period gradually introduces a change in the concept of *dāna*. It is no longer the arbitrary liberality of a generous patron celebrating his success. It is now less a channel of redistribution of wealth and much more pointedly a channel of deliberate exchange. The changing concept is expressed in the more frequent use of the word *dakṣiṇā*. The strengthening of the notion of exchange is perhaps best summed up in the statement, *dehi me dadāmi te ni me dehi ni te dadhe*.[25] The donor and the recipient remain the same. The appropriateness of the gift and the faith with which it is given are emphasized and the place and time are made much more precise. This is done by a closer linking of gift-giving with the sacrificial ritual via the *dakṣiṇā*. The justification for *dāna* is also spelt out. We are told that there are two kinds of *devas*, the gods and the *brāhmaṇas* learned in the *Vedas*: both have to be propitiated, the former through *yajñas* and the latter through *dāna*.[26] It is also at this point that there is mention of fields and villages as appropriate items of *dāna*, although these references are as yet infrequent.[27] Although *paśu* or animal wealth is still very significant there are some texts which disapprove of the acceptance of animals as *dāna* and presumably preferred gold and land.[28] This is not surprising since by the mid-first millennium BC animal wealth as an economic asset was gradually giving way to land. An interesting indication of the shift in the items gifted is evident from the study of the *rājasūya* sacrifice. The concept of *iṣṭi-pūrta* becomes more central to the procedure with a distinction being made not only between *iṣṭi* and *pūrta* but between *iṣṭi* and *dakṣiṇā*. This is a ritual distinction but not altogether unrelated to the relative decline of livestock breeding and increase of agriculture. The *iṣṭi* which is the offering made to the gods during the performance of the sacrifice is almost invariably a mixture or a cake of some form of cereal, the most frequently used cereals being varieties of rice. The *dakṣiṇā* on the other hand is in most cases an ox, cow, or bull, generally a single animal with specified markings, or else a unit of gold.[29] The number of animals is considerably less than the numbers listed in the Ṛgvedic *dāna-stutis*. Sometimes for the seasonal sacrifices the *dakṣiṇā* may include a chariot and mares or stallions.[30] The more spectacular *dakṣiṇā*, which, for instance, is given during the soma rituals of the *rājasūya*, continues however to be in the form of livestock. The list ranges from one thousand to four thousand cows adding up to a total of ten thousand in some texts—a reasonable figure for a wealthy king, to five thousand to thirty thousand cows with a total of a hundred thousand in other texts—an evidently exaggerated figure.[31] Nevertheless the number of cows listed continues to be less than the figures given in the *Ṛg Veda*. Since many of the higher figures in both the earlier and later texts were in any case exaggerated, their significance symbolizes the use of animals rather than the actual numbers involved.

Dakṣiṇās associated with particular royal rituals as part of the major sacrifices often consisted of gifting to the priest the most valuable objects used in the ritual. Thus in one text we are told that the *adhvaryu* receives the chariot of the *yajamāna* and the golden dice used in the symbolic game. The carts are distributed among other priests as are also the one thousand cows used in the mock cattle-raid.[32] The *adhvaryu* and the *hotṛ* who recite the legend of Śunaḥśepa at the *rājasūya* are given the golden seats on which they sit for the recitation in addition to a certain number of cows.[33] It is also in connection with this sacrifice that one of the forms of *dakṣiṇā* listed is that of *catuṣpat kṣetra* (field with four parts) which is given to a priest.[34] It has been suggested that this was the land used in a royal ploughing rite as part of the *rājasūya*, being the survival of a rudimentary agrarian fertility rite.

In all these cases the *dakṣiṇā* is specifically linked to a particular ritual or a ceremony. Heesterman has argued at length that the *dakṣiṇā* is not a sacrificial fee or salary; it forms a part of the bigger sphere of gift-exchange.[35] His main point is that the *dakṣiṇā* is given to both the *ṛtvij* or officiating priests and to others such as the *brāhmaṇas* of the *prasarpaka* category whose role is essentially that of observers sitting in the *sadas*. In one of the texts it is specifically stated that the *dakṣiṇā* to the *sadasyas* is to buy them off from drinking the *soma*.[36] Another text maintains that the *yajamāna* by giving *dakṣiṇā* buys himself loose from obligations to the priest.[37] The ritual link is broken or is at least replaced by a status link. Not all texts however accept that the link is broken. The *dakṣiṇā* is seen as a bond between the donor and the recipient, if not as an act by which the recipient is placed under an obligation to the donor. This implies a danger and the danger can only be averted by careful consideration of the propriety of the gift, the place and the time.[38] It is a moot question as to whether the notion of the implicit danger arose from the ritual connection or whether it was a means of diverting attention from regarding the *dakṣiṇā* as a 'fee'.

Heesterman suggests that the *dakṣiṇā* may reflect an earlier stage when the entire clan took part in the ritual and the wealth was shared. This would be more characteristic of the potlatch. In course of time the ritual may have moved into the hands of the sacrificial priests and the others may have become observers. The symbolic nature of the *dakṣiṇā* is evident from the continued gifting of cattle in a society where land was becoming increasingly more lucrative. Clearly, golden seats and golden dice would have to be converted into more mundane objects for the priests to derive a livelihood from these gifts. The question is whether the *dakṣiṇā* was over and above the normal livelihood of the priest or was it his main source of income. Given the nature of later Vedic society where there are not too many references to *brāhmaṇas* owning land or large herds of cattle it is likely that the *dakṣiṇā* from the king would often be the basic source of livelihood for those performing the rituals.

The collection of *dakṣiṇā* was not restricted to the large-scale *yajñas*, for the life of the *ārya* was now beset by *saṃskāras*—the rituals of the individual biography, the prescription and practice of which ensured well-being. The definition of donor gradually began to include more than just the king or the chief, for others were also required to perform *saṃskāras*. This widening definition of the donor in terms of social categories reaches a qualitative change in Manu, where logic takes it to the point of stating that it is the duty of the *gṛhastha* (the householder) to be concerned with *dāna*.[39] The relevance of gift-exchange in a tribal context of potlatch activities seemed to be receding.

Marcel Mauss in his discussion of gift-exchange maintains that the *Mahābhārata* is the story of a tremendous potlatch.[40] He has particularly pointed to the *Anuśāsana-parvan* as the section par excellence devoted to gift-giving. Here we find a further elaboration of the categories of *dāna*. The distinction for example between *iṣṭa* and *pūrta* is emphasized. The *iṣṭa* is that which is offered into the *gṛhya* and *śrauta* ritual fires. *Pūrta* is a larger enterprise and consists of the donation of wells, tanks, temples, gardens and lands.[41] The donation of immovable property as a special category is a relatively new concept. Hitherto donations were of animals, gold, food, clothing, chariots and so on. The listing of what is included in *pūrta* has its own significance since it points clearly to the establishing of a larger agricultural economy where wells, tanks, gardens and land have a utility which they would not have had in a pre-eminently pastoral economy. Another interesting aspect to this distinction which develops in the legal literature is that the *iṣṭa* can only be handled by the ritually pure but the *pūrta-dāna*, which in economic terms was the more effective, can also be made by *śūdras*.[42]

Not only in the items listed but in spirit too the notion of *dāna* had by now undergone further changes. It was no longer given merely in celebration of an event or a heroic personality or in connection with a ceremony. It was now associated with a new idea which in part derived from the concept of *dakṣiṇā*, namely, the ethical aspect of performing an action such as giving a gift. The notion of exchange remains central, but in return for tangible wealth the donor acquires merit. Not that all exchange discussed in the *Anuśāsana-parvan* is motivated by the acquisition of merit. We are told that *dāna* increases one's material wealth; nevertheless, in every act of giving, whether it be the *pañcadakṣiṇā* service of host to guest or offerings at a ritual, there is merit to be acquired as the ultimate aim.[43] Gift-giving almost develops its own ritual in which the six-fold definition *of dāna* as stated in *smṛti* literature is given due emphasis. The definition of the *pratigrahītā* is further refined and it is stated that the recipient must be deserving of the *dāna*.[44] This has relevance not only to the fact that the acquisition of merit can only accrue if the *dāna* is given to a deserving person but also carries a hint of competition among potential recipients for the acquisition of economic status in a system where, perhaps, more attention was being paid to economic status than in earlier times. *Dāna*, therefore, is not to be given to those *brāhmaṇas* who are physicians, image-worshippers, dancers, musicians; who perform ceremonies for the *śūdras* and who practise usury. The deserving *brāhmaṇas* are those who perform the required ceremonies as indicated in the texts, who are of noble birth and who live off alms. Even if any among this category have had to take to professions such as agriculture and soldiery, they still qualify for *dāna*. The emphasis on the time and place for gift-giving is accompanied by threats that untimely gifts are appropriated by the *rākṣasas*. The emphasis on the recipient being a deserving person may also be a reflection of competition for *dāna*-bestowing patrons, a competition extending not only to brahmanical sects but including Buddhist, Jaina and other heterodox sects as well, many of the latter claiming to have wealthy patrons.

The exchange of *dāna* for merit echoes the Buddhist notion of charity or *dāna*. The idea may therefore have come from Buddhist sources or may have grown independently as a result of changing social forms. For Buddhism the stress on *dāna* was essential; for, even at the mundane level, the Buddhist religious order—the *saṅgha*—was required to subsist on the alms and the charity of the lay followers. All that the *bhikṣu* or the *saṅgha* could provide to the donor in exchange for *dāna* was *puṇya* or merit, since exchange was between economically unequal sections of society. In the early stages, when Buddhism was not a powerful religious movement, it could neither provide social status to its lay supporters nor did its doctrinal teaching promise immortality or heavenly abodes. At most it could maintain that a material gift would be reciprocated with preaching the Buddhist ethic which in turn might provide the gift of vision or enlightenment to the donors. Puranic texts are unequivocal in making promises: thus we are told that the acquisition of merit through *dāna* can release one from the chain of rebirth.[45]

The reciprocity of *dāna* with *puṇya* may also have been conditioned by the fact that in the larger towns, where there was a Buddhist following, the gift-exchange economy was on the decline and was being gradually replaced by an approximation to the impersonal market economy of commerce, where the unit of money was the currency of exchange. In such an ethos gift-exchange made little sense and the *dāna-puṇya* reciprocity held out some compensation for the donor. It is significant that among the non-deserving *brāhmaṇas* listed in the *Anuśāsana-parvan* are those who practise usury and those whose occupation is trade, both activities closely related to a market system. In contrast to the market system, *dāna* is not an impersonal exchange. It involves two parties in a clearly defined relationship, which relationship is affected by the giving of *dāna*. It is also accompanied by an elaborate etiquette, much more elaborate than the frank appeal for *dāna* in the *Ṛg Veda* or the partially disguised *dakṣiṇā* of the *yajñas* and the *saṃskāras*.[46] It would almost appear that by insisting on the institution of *dāna* and the ensuing nexus there was an attempt to invert the values of the market system and to reincarnate those of the gift-exchange.

It is also at this time that attention is given to the acceptance of food as *dāna*. Manu lists the categories of food, chiefly uncooked, which are regarded as legitimate *dāna* for the *brāhmaṇa*.[47] If a *brāhmaṇa* unwittingly accepts forbidden food he has to fast for three days as expiation. Among the types of uncooked food, it is the produce of agriculture, grain, which is the most acceptable. Manu repeats the dictum that the giver will be rewarded many-fold but also adds that he who gives and he who receives, both go to heaven. The eulogizing of the *dāna* of food, especially to *brāhmaṇas*, continues in the later literature of the *Purāṇas* where *annadāna* is sometimes referred to as the highest form of *dāna*.[48] The relative purity of uncooked food is in contrast to the practice of sects of Buddhists and Jainas among whom cooked food is regarded as the most acceptable.[49] In terms of conferring status via exchange, the *dāna* of food has a direct relation to caste status, where the acceptability of particular types of food is dependent on social ranking. The discussion therefore of food as *dāna* is also an indication of the extension of caste society.

The gifting of land and the precedence which this began to take over other items reflects the increased interest in agriculture and the fact that land was more lucrative than heads of cattle. This would certainly conform to the known extension of the agrarian economy during the Mauryan and the post-Mauryan period. The general decline of pastoralism is evident from the fact that cows were still gifted but not as major items of *dāna*. Their gifting was to become almost a symbolic gesture of the process of making a gift. The gifting of land brought its own problems since land was both immovable and indestructible. It could not be transported as could a herd of cattle or other objects, nor did it get consumed or die during the lifetime of the recipient. Land was inheritable and alienable and this brought it under the purview of the legal system relating to inheritance and sale of land. A land-gift had therefore to be recorded so that it would remain with the recipient or his family even if he changed his domicile or after his death. A gift of land was even further removed from gift-exchange since it could help establish the family of the recipient for many generations and, to that extent, it was not a momentary episode but an investment for the future.

A discussion on the necessity to record a gift of land suggests that the record should act as the legal claim of the grantee and his family before future kings.[50] Hence the record should be a permanent, signed, sealed edict referring to the lineage of the king, the identity of the recipient, the extent and characteristics of the land gifted, the nature of the gift, the seals of the officials concerned with the grant and, according to some texts, a declaration to the effect that it was not to be resumed at a later date. That these instructions were meticulously observed is evident from the copperplate and other charters recording such gifts of land from the Gupta period onwards.[51] The granting of land and villages to *brāhmaṇas* became so institutionalized that it was referred to by the special term of *agrahāra* and later an officer was appointed to look after such grants, the *agrahārika*.

With the granting of land other gifts assumed lesser importance with the exception, of course, of gold which retained its economic value. A special category of gifts was evolved based on gold and referred to as the *mahādānas*.[52] These were made on very special occasions such as can hardly be listed in the normal course of gift-giving. Among the more commonly referred to *mahādānas* were the *tulapuruṣa* (weighing a man against gold) and the *hiranyagarbha* (the symbolic rebirth through a golden womb often performed during coronations). It is significant that this latter ceremony is particularly associated with those who were claiming *kṣatriya* status. Usually sixteen objects are listed among the *mahādānas* including trees, cows, horses, chariots, vessels, all made of gold, and such objects were gifted to the priests on the conclusion of the ceremony. A golden cow studded with precious stones was a long way away from the ten thousand head of cattle which the Ṛgvedic priests acclaimed as a gift. The *mahādānas* are clearly of another category and another time.

Land grants constituted the germ of what was later to develop into a new agrarian structure with its own implications for social and economic formations.[53] For our purposes, suffice it to say that the extensive granting of land as *dāna* changed the comprehension of *dāna* as part of gift-exchange. A new institutionalizing of *dāna* took place, reflecting both a departure from the earlier socio-economic system as well as the evolving of a changed metaphor for both the donor and the recipient.

Notes and References

* Published in *Indica*, vol. 13 (1976), nos 1 and 2, 37–48. Copyright © 1976 by Heras Institute of Indian History and Culture. Used with permission.

1. P.V. Kane, *History of Dharmaśāstra*, Poona, 1941, vol. II, part 2, pp. 843ff.
2. *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*, II.2.2.1–2; IV.3.4.1–2.
3. *Manu*, III. 128–37.
4. J.C. Heesterman, *The Ancient Indian Royal Consecration*, Berlin, 1957, p. 164.
5. *Manu*, XI.38–40.
6. *The Gift*, London, 1954, pp. 45ff, 53ff, 71ff.
7. J.P.S. Uberoi, *Politics of the Kula Ring*, Manchester, 1962.
8. *Ṛg Veda*, VI.63.9; V.27; V.30.12–14; VI.47; VIII.1.33; VIII.5.37; VIII.6.47.
9. *Ṛg Veda*, VIII.5; VI.27.
10. *Ṛg Veda*, VIII.46; X.93.
11. *Ṛg Veda*, VI.47.
12. *Ṛg Veda*, VI.47; VIII.1.
13. *Ṛg Veda*, VI.47; I.126.
14. *Ṛg Veda*, VI.33.1; VI.63.9; VIII.46.21–4.
15. *Ṛg Veda*, V.30.15; VI.47.
16. *Ṛg Veda*, X.107.
17. R.S. Sharma, 'Forms of Property in the Early Portions of the Ṛg Veda', *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress*, 1973.
18. Sharma, 'Forms of Property in the Early Portions of the Ṛg Veda'.
19. *Ṛg Veda*, I.33.3; IV.28.5; V.34.5; VI.13.3; VIII.64.2–4.
20. Sharma, 'Forms of Property in the Early Portions of the Ṛg Veda'.
21. *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa*, VIII.21. *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*, XIII.7.1.13–15.
22. As has been suggested by K.P. Jayaswal in *Hindu Polity*, arguing that perhaps the *vidatha* was a tribal assembly, pp. 69–70.
    This has been further discussed by R.S. Sharma, *Political Ideas and Institutions in Ancient India*, Delhi, 1959, pp. 63–80 and J.P. Sharma, *Republics in Ancient India*, Leiden, 1968, pp. 70ff. See also *Ṛg Veda*, I.24.3; I.27.5ff; 1.31.6; I.102.4; I.141.1; II.2.12; VII.76.4–5; IX.81.5.
23. H.W. Bailey, 'Iranian Arya and Daha', *Transactions of the Philological Society*, 1959, pp. 71ff.

24. *Nighaṇṭu*, 2.6; *Pāṇini*, 3.1.103.
25. *Taittirīya Saṃhitā*, I.8.4.1.
26. *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*, IV.6.6.1ff.
27. *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa*, VIII.20; *Chāndogya Upaniṣad*, IV.2.4–5.
28. Kane, *History of Dharmaśāstra*, pp. 837ff.
29. *Taittirīya Saṃhitā*, I.8.9; I.7.3. Heesterman, *The Ancient Indian Royal Consecration*, pp. 49, 174.
30. *Āpastamba Śrauta Sūtra*, 5.23.5; 6.30.7.
31. Heesterman, *The Ancient Indian Royal Consecration*, p. 162.
32. *Baudhāyana Śrauta Sūtra*, 12.7.95.15ff.
33. *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa*, VII.18.
34. Heesterman, *The Ancient Indian Royal Consecration*, p. 166.
35. Heesterman, 'Reflections on the Significance of the Dakṣiṇā', *Indo-Iranian Journal*, 1959, no. 3, pp. 241–58.
36. *Kātyāyana Śrauta Sūtra*, 28.5.
37. *Āpastamba Śrauta Sūtra*, 13.6.4.
38. *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*, IX.5.2.16; *Āpastamba Śrauta Sūtra*, 13.6.4–6; *Kātyāyana Śrauta Sūtra*, 28.158.4; 159.16.
39. *Manu*, III.78.
40. M. Mauss, *The Gift*, London, 1954, pp. 53ff.
41. Kane, *History of Dharmaśāstra*, p. 844.
42. Kane, *History of Dharmaśāstra*, p. 845.
43. *Anuśasana-parvan*, II, VII, VIII, IX.
44. *Anuśasana-parvan*, XXIII.
45. *Agni Purāṇa*, 209.1–2.
46. *Anuśāsana-parvan*, LXXII.
47. *Manu*, IV.205–25; 235–50.
48. *Agni Purāṇa*, 211.44–6; *Padma Purāṇa*, V.19.289–307; *Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa*, 218.10.32.
49. As for example in the *Ācārāṅgasūtra*, II.1.1–10. Manu does however insist that the *saṃnyāsin* must only accept cooked food (VI.38) and the reason for this may well have been that he was outside the norms of social regulations.
50. *Yājñavalkya*, I.318–20.
51. Inscription of Śivaskandavarman, *Ep. Ind.*, I. p. 7; Maitraka Vyāghrasena, *Ep. Ind.*, XI. p. 221; pp. 107.111.
52. *Agni Purāṇa*, 209, 210; *Matsya Purāṇa*, 274–89; *Liṅga Purāṇa*, II.28.
53. D.D. Kosambi, *Introduction to the Study of Indian History*, Bombay, 1956, pp. 275ff; R.S. Sharma, *Indian Feudalism*, Calcutta, 1965.

4

The Rāmāyaṇa: *Theme and Variation**

The epic can be seen as the expression of a certain historical consciousness, even though the events which it describes may not be historically authenticated. The epic form is in origin part of an oral tradition and comes to be 'frozen' into a literary form at a date subsequent to that of the oral composition. It reflects a changed historical situation in which the new is looking back on the old and often doing so nostalgically. The nostalgia is, however, circumscribed by new demands. The continuity of the epic is not merely due to a love for mythology and legend in a particular society. Undoubtedly, the appeal of the narrative, the literary form, the evocation of imagery and symbolism and the ethical emphases, all ensure continuity: but the role of the epic in the making of a historical tradition relates more closely to its potential function in such a tradition.

The popularity and the function of the epic *Rāmāyaṇa* in the Vālmīki version are manifest at many historical levels. As a poetic expression it had a literary appeal which, with the spread of Sanskrit, was introduced into new areas at specific times. In turn it became the model for the development of epic genres associated with Sanskritic culture. The literary currency of the epic is apparent from allusions in inscriptional records. As a theme it incorporates the great universal ethic of the battle between good and evil with a large number of subsidiary themes relating to ethical behaviour in a range of human relationships. At a wider level it functions as a link between the classical tradition and local culture where the epic form facilitates assimilation from one to the other, for what is pertinent to the local culture can be incorporated into the epic through fresh episodes.

In the same way, the geographical horizon of the epic can be extended through the inclusion of local places as the locations of events. An even more significant development in the *Rāmāyaṇa* is its function as a text to propagate Vaisnavism, with the transformation of the hero-prince into an *avatāra* of Viṣṇu. To all these may be added yet another aspect: that the *Rāmāyaṇa* symbolizes the triumph of the monarchical state, and the epic therefore becomes a charter of validation for the monarchical state. As such it can either be used directly where validation is required by groups seeking kinship links with the hero, or else can be virtually reversed if the validation is required for those who were considered the enemies in the original story.

The present paper is concerned with this latter aspect of the role of the epic, and attempts an analysis of three major and different versions of the narrative of events included in the *Rāmayaṇa* and the degree to which they can be seen as charters of validation referring to distinct and separate groups. The three versions are first, the parallels to the *Rāmāyaṇa* themes in the Buddhist *Jātaka* literature, and second, the Vālmīki *Rāmāyaṇa* and, finally, the Jaina version of the story, the *Paumacariyam* of Vimalasūri. Irrespective of when the earliest oral tradition was current, these three versions were composed and compiled in the period approximately between the fifth century BC and mid-first millennium AD. What seems significant therefore is the question of the need for these versions and the reasons for the dissimilarities in treatment.

References to the *Rāmāyaṇa* as such in Buddhist sources are met with in the commentaries and in the texts of the later period such as the *Cūlavaṃsa*.[1] The former dismiss the epic with the uncomplimentary remark that it is 'purposeless talk'. But the *Jātaka* literature has many scattered fragments which echo episodes from the story. It has been suggested that these fragments or *ākhyānas* may have been put together in the larger epic, the implication being that both *Jātaka* stories and the *rāma-kathā* derive from a common oral tradition. That the *Jātaka* versions were not an attempt at an alternative version of the *Rāmāyaṇa* seems evident from the absence of any rewriting of the epic as such in the Buddhist tradition. The stories merely illustrate certain actions by recourse to tales familiar to a wide audience, although the details of the stories often differ from the episodes in the *Rāmāyaṇa*. These differences are important. The *Jātaka* stories associated with the *Rāmāyaṇa* consist either of those which relate events parallel to the events of the *Rāmāyaṇa* or which contain verses alluding to the narrative of the *Rāmāyaṇa* or personalities involved in the story. The selection is therefore not arbitrary. There are some *Jātakas* where the reference is indirect but quite clearly to the *Rāmāyaṇa* itself as when a verse describes the emotion of Rāma's mother on his exile to Daṇḍaka[2] or the reference to Sītā's devotion to Rāma as reflected in her accompanying her husband into exile.[3] Rāma is described as *daśaratha-rājaputta* in the commentary to this *Jātaka*.[4] There is also a reference to a *Rāma-mātuposaka*, an inhabitant of Varanasi who went to Daṇḍaka, a country which was being destroyed by the wickedness of the king.[5] Other *Jātakas* refer to places, persons and episodes which are also mentioned in the Vālmīki *Rāmāyaṇa* or can be associated with this text. Thus Daṇḍaki is referred to as the king ruling over Daṇḍaka which is associated with the area extending down to the Godavari river[6] and his capital is at Kumbhavatī. In the *Ayodhyākāṇḍa* of the Vālmīki *Rāmāyaṇa*, Daśaratha is forced to agree to the exile of Rāma because Kekeyi invokes a boon which he had given her and the exile of his son is explained by his having to undergo the same fate as the blind parents of the young ascetic whom he had accidentally killed whilst on a hunt.[7] This episode has its parallel in the *Sāma Jātaka*.[8]

The town of Ayodhyā is known but not very clearly located. On one occasion it is said to have been attacked by the Andhavenuputta, who besieged and subjugated the city and then returned to Dvāravatī.[9] This reference to the Andhaka-vṛṣṇi clans of the Yādava lineage is echoed in Puranic records where mention is made of the Haihayas, a segment of the Yādava lineage, attacking Kosala.[10] The city of Sāketa which arose on the decline of Ayodhyā is more frequently mentioned in Buddhist sources and is often associated with the Śākyas.[11]

Mithilā and Videha are mentioned more frequently in the *Jātaka* literature.[12] A prince of Mithilā studied together with a prince from Varanasi at Taxila.[13] King Videha ruled at Mithilā and was instructed in the law by four sages.[14] Suruci is referred to as the king of Mithilā in Videha.[15] Similarly, Makhadeva ruled for eighty-four thousand years and became a monk when he saw the first grey hair on his head[16]—a theme often repeated in Buddhist texts. The story is further elaborated upon in the *Nimi Jātaka* where Makhadeva is reborn as Nimi and acquires renown as one who practises all the Buddhist precepts and virtues.[17] He is therefore invited to visit Indra's heaven which he does for seven days making a detour via hell. Nimi also renounces the world on sighting the first grey hair on his head and his son Kalāra-Janaka becomes king. The *Mahājanaka Jātaka* has a long account of the ancestry and tribulations of Mahājanaka who, having lost his right to accession at birth, manages to regain his kingdom but eventually renounces his princely existence and becomes an ascetic.[18] The descriptions of Mithilā in this *Mahājanaka Jātaka* are reminiscent of the descriptions of Ayodhyā in the Vālmīki *Rāmāyaṇa* as a city of considerable splendour and wealth.[19] Elsewhere too, Videha is described as a rich land of sixteen thousand villages and with well-filled granaries and storehouses and sixteen thousand dancing girls.[20] Names such as Nimi and Janaka occur in the Puranic genealogies of the Videha branch of the Ikṣvāku lineage.[21] The religious and philosophical activities of these kings are not dissimilar to the descriptions of Janaka in the later Vedic literature except that in those texts the connections are with the performance of Vedic *yajñas* and the pre-occupation with Upanisadic discourses.[22]

The *Jātaka* story which comes closest to the theme of the *Rāmāyaṇa* is, of course, the *Dasaratha Jātaka* and this has been commented upon at length.[23] Dasaratha is described as the king of Varanasi. He has two sons, Rāma-paṇḍita and Lakkhana, and a daughter, Sītā-devī, from his eldest queen. After her death he raises another wife to the status of queen consort and she demands that her son Bharata be made the heir-apparent. The king, frightened that the new consort will harm the elder sons suggests to them that they flee to the neighbouring kingdom and claim their rights after Dasaratha has died, it having been prophesied that Dasaratha would die after twelve years. Sītā accompanies her brothers and the three go to the Himalaya. Dasaratha dies after nine years. Bharata, refusing to become king, goes in search of Rāma and tries to persuade him to return. Lakkhana and Sītā, on hearing of their father's death, faint, but Rāma preaches to them on the impermanence of life. Rāma insists that he will return only after the twelve years have been completed and therefore gives his sandals to Bharata to guide him in taking decisions. Finally, Rāma returns to his kingdom, makes Sītā his queen consort and rules righteously for sixteen thousand years.

This is in essence the story of the *Ayodhyā-kāṇḍa*, the second book of the Vālmīki *Rāmāyaṇa*. But it also carries traces of the origin myths of various *kṣatriya* clans, pre-eminently the Śākyas and Koliyas, described in other Buddhist sources.[24] King Okkāka, the founder of the Okkāka or Ikṣvāku lineage and the ancestor of the Śākyas, banished the children of his elder queen to the Himalaya and made the son of the younger queen his heir. The exiled children, four sons and five daughters, paired off and became the ancestors of the Śākyas, founding a city at Kapilavastu. The origin of the Koliyas is linked to this story and is traced back to Rāma, the king of Varanasi who was exiled because he had leprosy. He cured himself as well as the eldest daughter of King Okkāka, whom her brothers had left in the forest. They lived together in a *kol* tree and became the parents of sixteen twins, the ancestors of the Koliyas. Koliyanagara was built at the site of the *kol* tree. The thirty-two Koliya princes abducted the daughters of their maternal uncles, the Śakyas, in the accepted manner of certain cross-cousin marriage systems.

The link between Okkāka and the northern region is emphasized in both these stories as also in a *Jātaka* story which states that Okkāka sent for a Madra princess for his son Kuśa.[25] On this occasion Okkāka is said to be the king of the Mallas ruling from Kuśavatī. The princess curiously has a hunchbacked nurse. The Madras were the neighbours of the Kekeyas in northern India. That the Ikṣvākus were originally based further to the west and appear to have migrated eastwards to the middle Ganga valley is implied in certain references to them in Vedic literature.[26] In case of such a migration the shorter and more likely route was probably along the foothills of the Himalaya and the northern fringes of the Ganga valley.

At some point the lineage of Okkāka was connected with that of Ikṣvāku. The name Okkāka is said to derive from *Okkamukha* because when he spoke light seemed to come from his mouth.[27] The Northern Buddhist tradition equates Okkāka with Ikṣvāku and derives the etymology from *ikṣu*, sugarcane, the usual etymology in Puranic sources.[28] Was the association with the Ikṣvākus a later attempt to link the *kṣatriya* clans which supported Buddhism with one of the two major royal lineages of the Puranic *kṣatriya* tradition? This may explain why these clans are given no importance in the Puranic accounts. The relevance of Buddhist origin myths to the epic has to do with the association of these clans with the *janapada* of Kosala.[29]

The theme of exile occurs more than once in the *Jātaka* literature, but of these the *Sambula Jātaka*[30] is the closest in detail to the *Rāmāyaṇa* story. A prince exiles himself on account of leprosy and his wife accompanies him. She is kidnapped by a *rakkhasa* in the forest, but Śakra comes to her aid and she returns to her husband. In spite of her many efforts to reassure him he remains suspicious of her chastity. Ultimately they are reconciled. It is, however, the *Vessantara Jātaka* which is most frequently quoted in connection with the exile theme.[31] Vessantara, the son of the ruler of

YAN RAO MEL
National Law Scho
BANGALOR

Sivi, is the epitome of the gift-giving prince since he bestows his wealth in the form of *dāna* on all who ask for it. Finally, he goes to the extent of gifting his famous rain-inducing elephant to the king of Kaliṅga who asks for it in order to terminate a prolonged drought in Kaliṅga. This incenses the subjects of Vessantara who banish him from the kingdom, the loss of this particular elephant symbolizing the loss of prosperity. His wife, in emulation of Sītā, accompanies him into exile. He travels to the Ceta/Cedi kingdom and lives in the Gandhamadana forest. Even here he is beset by greedy *brāhmaṇas*. His children are taken away by a *brāhmaṇa* from Kalinga and another asks for his wife to work as a slave. Eventually Śakra appears and it turns out that the tribulations of Vessantara are a test of his generosity.

Underlying the many stories there are some themes which appear to be significant not only in themselves but also as suggestive of some of the ideas which might have gone into the shaping of the Vālmīki *Rāmāyaṇa* as well, although from a non-Buddhist perspective. There is first of all the extension of the geographical circumference. Mention is made of the links and alliances between the *janapadas* of the middle Ganga valley with *janapadas* in two different directions. One appears to have been along the northern route, the *uttarapatha*, to the *janapadas* of the Indo-Gangetic divide, Punjab and the north-west—that of the Kurus, the Kekayas, the Madras, Gandhāra and Kāmboja. The other went in a southerly direction via Cedi to Kaliṅga. The route from Kāśī to Cedi is said to have been infested with robbers.[32] But Cedi and Kaliṅga seem closely associated with a frequency of safe travelling.[33] The geographical dimension is emphasized in the theme of exile where banished princes go either to the Himalaya or southwards, as for example to Cedi.

The Cedi *janapada* is clearly an important area. The *Cetiya Jātaka* gives the lineage of the Cedi kings who ruled from the capital of Sotthivatinagara in Bundelkhand.[34] They were descended from Mahāsammata and the succession is given as far as the famous Uparicara, so named because he travelled through the sky. After him the lineage was segmented and his five sons ruled in five different regions, a statement which is confirmed in the *Purāṇas*.[35] The *Vessantara Jātaka* mentions that the Cetarattha/Cedirāṣṭra was full of meat, wine and rice, and inhabited by sixty thousand *khattiyas* who lived there as *cetiya rājās*. The Cedi-Kaliṅga link indicated in this *Jātaka* is historically attested in the Hathigumpha Inscription.[36] Khāravela, the king of Kaliṅga, describes himself as a descendant of

Uparicara Vasu, the Cedi king, and takes the title of Mahāmeghavāhana, as do other kings of Kaliṅga of this period. It would seem that the Cedis migrated or conquered the land to the southwest as far as Kaliṅga, thus extending their control from their original base in Bundelkhand.

Exile in these stories often seems to symbolize migration and settlement and even if the exiles return to their original homes, a connection with the area of exile is established. Colonization was probably expressed in the form of exile, perhaps to provide a dramatic context to the theme and an explanation for migration. Where new land was conquered and colonized the justification for the conquest was given in the theme of exile. The actual process of colonization would be similar in each case, irrespective of the story narrated for its justification. The process is described in the *Jayadissa Jātaka* where fresh land is settled by the king through clearing the land, building a lake, preparing the fields, bringing in one thousand families and founding a village such as will support ascetics by giving alms. New settlements result in the establishment of cities which become the capitals of new *janapadas* such as Kapilavastu and Koliyanagara. The city in turn symbolizes the spread of a particular cultural system.

Legitimacy is bestowed on the new settlement not by the area having been conquered but by the settlers being linked to the appropriate established lineages. Segments of the existing landowning *kṣatriya* lineages migrate to new areas and in settling there claim ownership by virtue of kinship links with the established lineages. The connotation of *kṣatriya* in the Buddhist texts was evidently more that of a landowning group than of a warrior. Thus, those who go into exile are members of the *rājakula* and not commoners. In some cases, as in that of the *Cetiya Jātaka*, fragments of their genealogy are given to indicate their status; in other cases it is enough to say that they belong to the Ikṣvāku lineage. The repeated occurrence of sibling parentage may symbolize marriage between two exogamous phratries or tribal subdivisions from the period of the original settlement and the emphasis on cross-cousin marriage which, whether actual or not, does indicate the adoption of a system different from that described in non-Buddhist literature. It has also been argued that this type of marriage is a method of stressing purity of lineage, where ancestry is traced back to a single set of parents. Purity of lineage would again reinforce status.[37] The theme of sibling marriage may suggest some traces of a system of succession where a brother and sister rule as king and queen but without conjugal relations. It appears to have been symbolic, unlike the Ptolemies of Egypt.

In terms of political sanction, these stories reflect a mixture of the *gaṇa-saṅgha* system of chiefships or oligarchies and the early stages of monarchy. There are references to the many thousand *khattiyas* or *rājās* ruling in certain *janapadas*, such as Cedi, which would indicate a *gaṇa-saṅgha* system. In other cases individual kings are referred to, but in contrast to the two other versions, kingship is still a relatively unstable feature in these stories. Kings can be removed by angry subjects as in the case of Vessantara. Even though he was removed while yet a prince, his father could do nothing to prevent his being exiled. Other *Jātakas* refer to kings being removed by their subjects as also to kings being elected by popular opinion, or situations of crisis where kings are called upon to abdicate.

These concerns are in turn enveloped in a Buddhist ethos. There is an emphasis on *dāna* where gift-giving becomes a major criterion of morality, as also the emphasis on *karuṇā* or compassion, so clearly expressed in the treatment of the story of the young ascetic killed by the king but revived by the faith of the blind parents. The benevolent and helping hand of Śakra assists in this. Central to this ethos is the *bodhisattva* ideal with the notion of rebirth to help in the salvation of others. In later times the ideal of the king and the *bodhisattva* were to merge, but at this point there is only the occasional king who is in fact a *bodhisattva*.

These four themes—the extension of the geographical area, migration and settlement, social and political legitimacy, and religious sanction—are recognized components of charters of validation and occur, as we shall see, in other versions of the *Rāmāyaṇa* story as well. In the *Jātaka* literature they are not integrated into a single text but remain as isolated episodes. There was evidently a floating oral tradition of such stories, probably a range of oral epics, and episodes from these were consciously worked into the text of the Vālmīki *Rāmāyaṇa*. That references are made to the text in the *Jātaka* stories would reflect the wide currency of the text at a period subsequent to the mid-first millennium BC.

It would be worth examining the way in which these four themes run parallel in the Vālmīki *Rāmāyaṇa*. This raises the problem of indicating at least some of the interpolations in the text, as also of sorting out the fragments which went into its making. There are two easily recognizable foci to the story, the events which centre on the kingdom of Ayodhyā and those which concern the period of exile.[38] Within each of these a number of sub-fragments can be detected.[39] It is also generally agreed that apart from specific interpolations, which are many, there are two substantial additions, namely, the *Bāla-kāṇḍa* and the *Uttara-kāṇḍa*, the first and the seventh books. These additions are largely extraneous to the story and appear to have been added mainly for didactic purposes. Both books carry many of the stock-in-trade myths from the *vaṃśānucarita* sections of the *Purāṇas* and from the *Mahābhārata*. In the case of the *Rāmāyaṇa* these are primarily the myths connected with the Ikṣvāku lineage. The first and the last books are again the ones in which the role of Rāma as the *avatāra* of Viṣṇu is highlighted, suggesting that these sections may have been introduced to convert the epic into a part of the Bhāgavata literature.[40] The justification for the killing of Rāvaṇa is sought in the appeal to Viṣṇu to incarnate himself and eliminate evil from the earth. Another aspect of the rise of Viṣṇu is the demoting of Indra, which is apparent in some sections of the seventh book in particular.[41] Indra, who in the Vedic literature is said to have been the protector of the Bharatas and the Cedis and various other clans, was both a warrior-deity as well as a practitioner of magical power as conveyed through *yātu* and *māyā*.[42] The use of his *vajra*, thunderbolt, is symbolic of this. The introduction of Sītā as a fertility goddess and the testing of her chastity and ultimate return to the earth are also included in these additions. It may be suggested that the conversion of Rāma from hero to deity has as its counterweight, the dethroning of Sītā as an independent goddess in her own right.

Apart from these obvious indications of later additions, there are other features which would further support this argument. The first and last books display a heightened consciousness regarding caste differences as compared to the earlier sections. This is particularly noticeable in the insistence on the elevated status of the *brāhmaṇa* in contrast to the *śūdra* and the prohibition on the mixing of castes.[43] Although *kṛṣi*, *gorakṣā* and *vāṇijya* are mentioned as the three main occupations, it is clear that herding and agriculture continue to be important.[44] The plough is referred to only in the later books and, curiously, throughout the period of exile no mention is made of anyone ploughing.[45] Merchants adorning the city and the complexities of occupations required for trading societies in the context of developed urban cultures are again features restricted to the first and last books, although references to shops, markets, etc. are made in connection with commerce in other sections of the text.[46] Similarly, in the process of gift-giving on various occasions, cattle, horses and gold take precedence over other forms of gifts. The gifting of villages, although known, is less frequent and is associated with Kosala.[47] A reference to *sāmanta* in the *Bāla-kāṇḍa* could also indicate a late date for this section unless it was referring to neighbours.[48]

One may therefore assume the validity of the theory that the original text consisted of what are now books two to six and that the first and seventh are later additions, quite apart from specific interpolations in the earlier texts as well. In the earlier sections the societies of both Kosala and the Rākṣasas are relatively less complex and the Rākṣasas approximate to human society to a far greater extent than in the later sections. The Rākṣasas are seen more as enemies than as demons; they perform ceremonies deriving from Vedic sanction and Rāvaṇa's wife refers to him as *ārya-putra*.[49] The impression is one of fairly equally matched societies but with different ways of life.

Going back to the themes emerging from the *Jātaka* literature, perhaps the most problematical is the question of the extension of the geographical circumference as it has to do with what seems to be the insoluble question of the location of Laṅkā. The geographical horizon primarily from the middle Ganga valley, Kosala, is extended into central India. The northern links are implicit in the Kosala-Kekaya alliance and are referred to marginally as when Bharata visits his maternal uncle. The major part of the narrative is located in central India and the Daṇḍaka forest. Those who argue for Laṅkā being identified with Sri Lanka (Ceylon) would extend the horizon south of the river Godavari;[50] those who support the identification of Laṅkā with either the vicinity of Tripuri, Amarakantaka or the Mahanadi or Godavari deltas would restrict the events of the exile to the Vindhyan region and what is sometimes called Gondwana.[51] The geographical directions listed in the epic appear to have been borrowed from other sources, mainly the *Purāṇas*, since the geographical order is sometimes confused and places at great distances from each other are juxtaposed.[52] Since the *Purāṇas* were composed later than the earliest version of the Vālmīki *Rāmāyaṇa* these geographical sections may well be later interpolations. Megasthenes refers to Sri Lanka under the name of Taprobane, presumably the Tamraparṇi of the Ceylon Chronicles. What is uncertain is the date at which the name Laṅkā became more current. The *Dīpavaṃsa* seems to suggest that this name was later than others.

By about the mid-first millennium BC the frequently referred to route to the peninsula from the Ganga valley was the *dakṣiṇāpatha* which would have involved a journey from Kauśāmbi to Pratiṣṭhāna via Ujjayini and Mahiṣmatī—a route considerably further west than the one taken by Rāma. The journey from Citrakūṭa into the Daṇḍakāraṇya as indicated in the *Rāmāyaṇa* points to a more easterly route, perhaps via Tripuri south to the Wainganga and Godavari valleys, a route which is not frequently mentioned but for which there is some evidence at this time.[53] Alternatively, the Cedi-Kaliṅga connection suggests a link emerging between Bundelkhand and the Mahanadi valley.

Perhaps a clue to the area of exile is provided by the reference to a new settlement resulting from the events of the epic and this was the kingdom of Dakṣiṇa Kosala (generally identified in the first millennium AD with the upper Mahanadi valley, the area of Bilaspur, Sambalpur and Raipur on the borders of present-day Madhya Pradesh and Orissa). We are told in the *Purāṇas* that after the area had been cleared of the *rākṣasas*, a kingdom was founded and was ruled by Kuśa, the son of Rāma, and his descendants.[54] Was this an attempt by the later dynasties of Dakṣiṇa Kosala to seek lineage links with the Ikṣvākus/Sūryavaṃśa or does it refer to the actual conquest of the area by an Ikṣvāku? Had this been an area of Ikṣvāku activity then the route to it in terms of geographical feasibility could have been from Bundelkhand to Tripuri and along the upper reaches of the Narmada to the watershed around Mandla and Amarakantaka overlooking the plains of Chhattisgarh and Dakṣiṇa Kosala. References to Dakṣiṇa Kosala in other historical sources are later and can perhaps be dated to the early centuries AD. The *Purāṇas* refer to a dynasty called Megha ruling over Kosala at a period contemporary with that of the Andhras.[55] The name Megha can perhaps be identified with the Megha dynasty of the early centuries AD whose seals and inscriptions have been found in the districts of Allahabad, Fatehpur, and Rewa, and who are said to have had their base in the Kauśāmbi area.[56] Were these the descendants of a once-powerful dynasty ruling in both the Bundelkhand and the Dakṣiṇa Kosala area? The entity of the latter as a separate region is recognized in the Gupta period.[57] The historically attested dynasties of Dakṣiṇa Kosala do not however always claim Ikṣvāku descent in spite of the statement to the contrary in the *Purāṇas*;[58] unless of course the area was initially conquered by members of an Ikṣvāku lineage and later gave way to others such as the Cedis but retained a memory of the initial conquest.

The condition of exile also serves to highlight the contrast between the kingdom and the forest. The demarcation between the Kosalan way of life and that of the *rākṣasas* is accentuated in the later books with weird and lurid descriptions of the *rākṣasas*. The lineages of the two groups are kept quite distinct. The royal families of Kosala and Videha are segments of the same descent group and can perhaps be seen as phratries with a common ancestor in Ikṣvāku and both being identified as Sūryavaṃśī.[59] The lineage of the *rākṣasas* is quite separate. Puranic sources refer to them as being of the Paulastyavaṃśa, which originated in Vaiśālī.[60]

The emphasis on primogeniture which is the pivot of the story in so far as the *Ayodhyā-kāṇḍa* is concerned reflects a well-established system of kinship in which hereditary authority has passed into the hands of a particular family whose legitimacy is based on descent—hence Daśaratha's anxiety at not having a son to succeed him.[61] The legitimacy is further emphasized by the introduction of Puranic legends relating to the lives of the royal ancestors even though the actual order of descent in the *Rāmāyaṇa* does not tally with those given in the Puranic literature.[62] Whereas the prince Vessantara in the *Jātaka* was exiled by the angry subjects of his father, in this case even though the subjects of Daśaratha were unhappy at the king's decision to banish Rāma, they could do nothing to change it.

A subtle but important distinction between the two societies, that of Kosala and that of Laṅkā, lies in the emphasis on the monarchical state in the one and its absence in the other. The kingdom of Kosala is well-defined and it takes three days from Ayodhyā to reach the border.[63] The *rākṣasas* do not seem to be limited by any political identity with a particular state. There are no boundaries and they seem to wander freely and interminably. The city of Laṅkā has a boundary by force of being an island and the area of Rāvaṇa's control is never clearly defined. *Rākṣasa* lineages seem to be distributed over a very wide area with kinship ties rather than territorial proximity linking them. In place of a strongly monarchical system, the *rākṣasas* seem to function as an oligarchy and the term *gaṇa* is often associated with them.[64] Even the hierarchies within society so evident in Ayodhyā are absent in Laṅkā, suggesting perhaps that the apportioning of wealth was on a less complex but more equitable system. And there was certainly no shortage of wealth in Laṅkā; nor is there any mention of castes among the *rākṣasas*. It could well be argued that the *rākṣasas* of Vālmīki are fanciful beings and would not conform to any particular social category, but since they are described as having the appurtenances of a human society the assumptions implicit in these descriptions can with justification be analysed.

Perhaps the distinction can be more easily seen in the economic activities of the two groups as highlighted in the later sections of the text. The state of Kosala is associated with plough agriculture and its wealth is described in terms of store-houses well stocked with grain and the bustle of traders and merchants and commercial wealth.[65] In contrast to this the wealth of the *rākṣasas* seems to derive primarily from forest and mineral resources. Plough agriculture is not mentioned in connection with Laṅkā nor does it boast of traders and merchants. Yet it is a city of fabulous wealth and literally glowing with trimmings of gold and gems—an almost unreal city. Clearly, it must have had an agricultural hinterland but this is not highlighted as in the case of Kosala, the agricultural economy perhaps playing a lesser economic role in Laṅkā.

The eulogy on the monarchical state is evident in the definition of kingship as it occurs in the *Rāmāyaṇa*. Kingship involves nurturing the sources of wealth and the administration of wealth, maintaining the distinctions of caste and hierarchy and supporting those who were the legitimizers of the systems.[66] None of this appears to have been of much concern to *rākṣasa* society. It would seem that the *Rāmāyaṇa* was juxtaposing two systems, the monarchical state and chiefships or oligarchies with an unflinching endorsement of the former.[67] To this extent the Vālmīki *Rāmāyaṇa* can be seen as a charter of validation for monarchies established in areas of erstwhile chiefships. This may be one partial reason for a possible geographical extension of the area of exile with every recession of the text, as well as the repeated adaptations and translations of later periods.

There was, however, yet another major theme introduced into the *Rāmāyaṇa* largely by way of later additions to the text and this was the theme of Vaiṣṇava *bhakti*. The text now became a necessary component of the literature used in the propagation of Vaiṣṇavism. It helped to popularize the ethic of the new cult of Bhagavatism. The mode of worship gradually changed from sacrifice to *bhakti*, but sacrifice was not debarred, since Rāma had protected the hermitages in the forest so that the sacrificial ritual should not be disturbed. The *avatāra* theory brought a new dimension into religious belief and in some ways paralleled the notion of the *bodhisattva*. It assisted in the process of acculturation both in channelizing Vaiṣṇava beliefs and values into new areas and in assimilating new cults.

The Vālmīki version of the *Rāmāyaṇa* story is significantly different in detail and construction from the *Jātaka* stories although thematically there is a parallel. The story as current at the time seems to have stimulated yet another version, namely, the Jaina text of Vimalasūri entitled the *Padmacarita* or, as it is called in Prākṛt, the *Paumacariyam* since it is written in Prākṛt. The date for this text as given by Vimalasuri is 530 years after the death of Mahāvāra, which would make it the first century AD, but most scholars prefer a later date ranging from the third to the seventh centuries AD.[68] The *Paumacariyam* was the earliest among a long line of Jaina versions of the story suggesting that the rewriting of this story was of considerable importance to the Jaina tradition. If the Vālmīki text was redacted by Vaiṣṇava propagandists, the Jaina version is even more didactic in its support of the Jaina religion. But at the same time it carries certain reversals of the story as discussed so far, which are of considerable historical interest.

We are told that the *Paumacariyam* is part of the *ācāryaparamparā* and it would be expected therefore to incorporate much of what might be called the prehistory of the Jaina tradition in the form of cosmology, creation legends and early mythological material. The *Rāmāyaṇa* story is introduced in a provocative manner. The initial scene is that of Magadha, a prosperous kingdom with its capital at Rājagṛha and ruled by king Śrenika (Bimbisāra).[69] Śrenika doubts the authenticity of the story as told in the existing versions of the *Rāmāyaṇa* and asks for the correct version. Most of his doubts centre round the characterization of the *rākṣasas* and in particular Rāvaṇa.[70] It is clearly stated that the *rākṣasas* were not demons and that the name comes from the root *rakṣa* (to protect).[71] Rāvaṇa was neither ten-headed nor a meat-eating fiend and all that has been said about him by foolish poets (*murkhakukavi*) is untrue.[72] The *Paumacariyam* is a conscious and deliberate attempt at rewriting the existing version of the *Rāmāyaṇa* story and depicting the *rākṣasas* in a better light. The story opens with a description of the land of the Vidyādharas of whom the *rākṣasas* and the Vānaras form a part. The early chapters provide a detailed account of the *rākṣasa* and Vānara lineages and it is not until well into the story that the Daśaratha episode is introduced. All the main characters involved in the story are pious Jainas, and therefore try to avoid violence: nevertheless, the heroic values cannot be entirely subdued and kings and princes do show their valour in combat and victory in arms through violence.

The geographical focus is essentially that of the Vindhyan region with its circumference extending south to the Godavari. There is a distinctly westward shift in the initial route taken by Rāma since it involves the

Gambhīra river (a tributary of the Chambal) and the towns of Avanti and Daśapura before reaching the Narmada. The narrative then moves in a more easterly and southerly direction. Most locations are in relation to the Vaitādhya mountain, also referred to as the Veyaddhagiri. Another Jaina text states that this mountain lay near Gandhamadana-vakkara (echoing the *Vessantara Jātaka*).[73] It is also said to be a very long range touching the Sindhu and the Ganga at each end.[74] If the Sindhu is the Kāli Sindhu then this would be the Vindhya range, with which it is often identified. Laṅkā is located at the base of the Trikūṭa mountain (the location of which is not given) on an island.[75] It would seem from the events of the exile that the location is somewhere in the Daṇḍakāraṇya.[76]

In the genealogical sections we are told that the four best known lineages are the Ikkhaga/Iksvāku, Somavaṃśa, Vijjaharana/Vidyādhara, and the Harivaṃśa.[77] The Ikṣvāku is also called the Adityayaśa, presumably a version of Sūryavaṃśa and companion to the Candravaṃśa/Somavaṃśa. Though not given priority in the list, the most important was the Vidyādhara since it is described in maximum detail. Even the etymologies of the names are sometimes included.[78] The Vidyādharavaṃśa traces its ancestry back to Ṛṣabha who in his later years becomes a monk and divides his kingdom of the Vindhyas between his two sons Nami and Vinami. Being the recipients of many *vidyās* they are called Vidyādhara. The most important among them is Meghavāhana who because of certain complications has to flee to Laṅkā where he establishes the Rākṣasavaṃśa.[79] Many of the names in the long lists seem to have been arrived at through free association although the immediate forefathers of the main personalities are more familiar. The Vidyādhara list has a large number of names connected with *vajra*, *vidyuta*, and *megha*.[80] Yet another segment of the Vidyādharavaṃśa is the Vānaravaṃśa, which is again founded by a Vidyādhara prince who is exiled to Vānaradvīpa which lies outside the Vindhyan region and where at Kiṣkindi he establishes his kingdom. It is called the Vānaravaṃśa because the prince takes a monkey emblem for his standard.[81] This is another point of contention with the Vālmīki *Rāmāyaṇa*. Vānaradvīpa is distinct from the Vaitāḍhya region but too far away, and is the habitat of monkey-like humans whom the prince has to train and discipline.[82] There are both conflicts and marriage alliances between the segments of the Vidyādhara lineage. Thus, although there is tension between the Rākṣasavaṃśa and the Vānaravaṃśa, Rāvaṇa, who is of the Rākṣasavaṃśa, is married to Śrīprabhā of the Vānaravaṃśa.[83] The Harivaṃśa, to which Janaka the father of Sītā belongs, is relatively minor and is not connected with the Ikṣvākuvaṃśa of Daśaratha. Of the earlier Ikṣvāku kings the *Paumacariyam* gives prominence to Sagara of Sāketa, who is said to have married a Vidyādhara princess.[84] The previous births of Sagara are given as well as the story of his sixty thousand sons, echoing the Puranic tradition.

Rāvaṇa is described as an ardent Jaina and a protector of the Jaina shrines. He is brave and handsome and woos many *apsarās*. He has the ability to fly and is therefore called *akāśamārgi*, and in addition he owns a *puṣpavimāna*, an aerial chariot which he uses on occasion.[85] (Strangely enough, Vimalasūri does not see this as an exaggeration.) Rāvaṇa therefore is no less of a hero than Rāma. His relationship with Sītā is sensitively delineated.

Rāma's first major exploit is the expulsion of the *mlecchas* threatening the kingdom of Janaka,[86] an exploit similar to that of Sagara of earlier times expelling the Haihayas. Daśaratha's desire to renounce the world on the teaching of a Jaina *muni* leads Kaikeyi to demand that her son succeed to the throne.[87] Daśaratha had granted a boon to Kaikeyi because of her skill in driving his chariot when he was contesting for her hand. Kaikeyi tries to dissuade Rāma from going into exile, since she merely wishes her son to be king. This would suggest that it was not the rule of primogeniture which was being transgressed but merely a matter of which son should succeed the father. The exiles set off for the Vindhyas and there could hardly be a greater contrast in the description of exile between the Vālmīki *Rāmāyaṇa* and the *Paumacariyam*. Whereas in the former it was the *āśramas* of the *ṛsis* which had to be protected, it is now predictably the Jaina shrines which replace the *āśramas*. The period of exile includes innumerable small episodes involving the princes and princesses of the region. Exile is hardly a condition of long periods of austerity in the forest. It is more frequently spent in setting right the manifold political problems of the many small courts scattered in the area. Austerity is frequently punctuated by prosperous villages, beautiful cities and royal palaces.[88]

In many ways the *Paumacariyam* is the mirror image of the Vālmīki *Rāmāyaṇa*. This is so not merely in its Jaina didactic context which has been commented upon before, but even in the thematic structure of the text in terms of the themes which have been examined so far in relation to the other texts.

The theme of exile occurs at two levels. One is the familiar exile of Rāma. The other is exile as migration and the settling of new areas which are referred to not in connection with the Ikṣvāku lineage but with the Vidyādhara lineage. Meghavāhana establishes himself in Laṅkā and gives rise to the Rākṣasavaṃśa and another prince founds the kingdom of Vānaradvīpa. There are close similarities to the Buddhist origin myths. In each case there is a new settlement demarcated by the term *dvīpa*, with its capital city and some distinguishing topographical feature, often a mountain. Exile is caused by some conflict with the established lineage and the rulers of the new settlement derive their status through kinship connections with the older and original lineage.

Unlike the vast wilderness through which the Vālmīki *rākṣasas* roam, the territories of the Vidyādharas are more clearly defined in the *Paumacariyam*. In the latter text it is the northern kingdoms which are vague and undefined. Many northern towns are referred to such as Hastināpura, Ahichhatra, Kampilya, Mathurā, Kauśāmbi, Prayāga and Varanasi, but these references occur more often in connection with the earlier *tīrthaṅkaras* than with the narrative of the story. The area of exile, the Vindhyan region and the Daṇḍakāraṇya, is no longer the forest haunt of demons extending over vast expanses for it now boasts of cities and kingdoms with only the occasional forest areas. The wilderness is evidently gradually being settled. Inevitably, the monarchical state is the accepted norm as much among the *rākṣasas* as among the Ikṣvāku. Not only this but even the institution of *sāmantas* or feudatory chiefs is also known. When Daśaratha decides to renounce his kingdom he invites his *sāmantas* to a consultation.[89] Similarly, when there is a political crisis in Kṣemāñjalipura in the Vindhyas, the *sāmantas* are consulted.[90] However, the alternative, earlier meaning of *sāmanta*, a neighbour, could also apply here.

Another striking difference is the absence in the *Paumacariyam* of the need to uphold the *varṇāśramadharma* and the status of the *brāhmaṇa*. The *brāhmaṇas* are here the heretics and the preachers of false doctrines who acquired their status through fraud.[91] The most respected social groups other than princes are the merchants, and princes are said on occasion to have been merchants in their previous births.[92] Maximum reverence is naturally given to the Jaina *munis* who weave their way through the narrative. It is they who often relate the stories of the previous births of various persons since they have access to such knowledge. Resort to such stories would not only enrich the narrative but could also be used as a technique to explain away problematical situations, and at the same time underline the concept of transmigration. Although there is no well-defined *avatāra* theory as in Vaiṣṇava Bhāgavatism, the tripartite complex of Vāsudeva, Prati-vāsudeva and Baladeva serves a similar function,[93] and the inevitability therefore of the predetermined relationship between Rāma and Rāvaṇa erodes some of the brutality of the conflict and reduces thereby the occasions for heroic stances. The Jaina *muni* is frequently found to be preaching renunciation. Finally, both Daśaratha and Rāma renounce the world and the Jaina ethic triumphs over the traditional *kṣatriya* ethic.

There is a wide divergence in style among the three versions of the *Rāmāyaṇa* story as examined here. Yet the thematic concerns seem very similar. The vehemence with which the *Paumacariyam* denounces the known versions of the *Rāmāyaṇa* and sets out to give a different version does suggest that there may have been a historical need for such a treatment. Could it be argued that the *Paumacariyam* was attempting to legitimize the Vidyādhara lineage and act as a charter of validation for the kingdoms which arose in the Vindhyan region and its fringes in the early first millennium AD?[94] The major kingdoms were those of western India such as the Traikūṭakas, rising on the decline of the Sātavāhanas and the Ābhīras; the Bodhi dynasty in the region of Tripuri and Bundelkhand, which area later saw the rise of the Kalacuris; the Bhojas and the Vakāṭakas ruling in Vidarbha; Dakṣiṇa Kosala and the Cedis of Kaliṅga. Linking many of these dynasties was what appears to be a Cedi connection with some among them using the Cedi era of AD 248–49 in their records.[95] Most of these dynasties do not publicize any substantial patronage to Jainism although Jainism was becoming more popular in this region during the early centuries AD. Many of them were seeking legitimation through the performance of Vedic sacrifices and *kṣatriya* lineage links. Those claiming Haihaya origins would probably have encouraged the questioning of the authenticity of the Bhārgava versions of the tradition, the Haihayas having been major enemies of the Bhārgavas in the past.[96] Was the *Paumacariyam*, therefore, intended primarily to question the Bhārgava version of the *Rāmāyaṇa* story and thus make it acceptable to the dynasties of Haihaya descent? Were the dynasties which claimed Cedi connections somehow linked in origin with the *rākṣasas* of the *Paumacariyam* if not of the Vālmīki *Rāmāyaṇa*?

It could be argued that the connection was fabricated and that the dynasties claiming Cedi ancestry in the first millennium AD were merely being invested with antiquity by being linked with the pre-eminent lineages of the region, the Haihayas and the Cedis. The search for such genealogical links was common to many dynasties of the first millennium AD and later. But the endorsement of these links with the *rākṣasas* of the *Rāmāyaṇa* story, which is what appears to be suggested in the *Paumacariyam*, is problematical. If this was merely a search for lineage connections then they would hardly choose to be linked with a defeated king and, more likely, the entire story would have been reversed to make Rāvaṇa the victor, or to link the new dynasties with the triumphant Ikṣvākus. The fact that Rāvaṇa is killed and that the main thrust of the *Paumacariyam* is to state that the *rākṣasas* have received prejudiced treatment at the hands of the authors of the *Rāmāyaṇa* and the many other versions of the story current at the time, lends greater credence to the possibility that they might have been the Cedi ancestors of the new dynasties. Were the *rākṣasas* of the Vālmīki version exaggerated to such an extent that the memory of their Cedi identity was pulverized? And yet not completely, for the strange ability of Rāvaṇa to travel through the sky and his aerial chariot has strong associations with the founder of the Cedi lineage, Vasu. The use of the term *meghavāhana*, both as a lineage name as well as a royal title, would help in maintaining the myth that it was derived from an earlier ability to 'ride the clouds'.[97]

The Jaina background to the *Paumacariyam* would not be averse to Cedi connections. Among early royal patrons the Jainas claim Candragupta Maurya during whose reign it is said that Magadha was a centre of Jaina activity.[98] In suggesting that Śrenika was conversing with Jaina teachers, Vimalasūri was merely projecting the association with Magadha to an earlier period. Puranic sources endorse an earlier link between the Cedis and Magadha. That the Kaliṅga Cedis were patrons of the Jainas is stated in their inscriptions. At about the same time Mathura emerged as an important centre of Jaina worship.[99] By the early centuries AD Vidiśā had Jaina centres and gradually such centres were established in Bundelkhand and Rewa as well.[100] The Jaina context of the *Paumacariyam* is therefore as much of a localized phenomenon as the lineages. The need to use the *Rāmāyaṇa* story may also have had to do with competition with other religious sects for patronage.[101] The inscriptions from western India suggest a partiality among royal families for patronage to Buddhist institutions. The decline of the Sātavāhanas and the Kṣatrapas may have provided an opportunity for the rise of Jainism in central India, as indeed the inauguration of the Cedi era may have heralded the rise of those claiming Cedi connections.[102]

With the increasing influence of Sanskritic culture the Vālmīki version seems to have gained wider currency as compared to that of Vimalasūri. By the end of the first millennium AD the later Kalacuris, although of Cedi association, take pride in their Haihaya descent and refer in their inscriptions to the defeat of Rāvaṇa at the hands of the Haihaya hero Arjuna Kārtavīrya.[103] There is also a linking of the Mahanadi area with place names from the *Rāmāyaṇa* story.[104] An inscription of the medieval period locates Dakṣiṇa Kosala to the west of Laṅkā which appears to have been the hinterland of the Mahanadi delta. The site of Sonepur is described as part of *paścima* Laṅkā and an island on the Mahanadi nearby (present-day Laṅkeśvarī) is referred to as Laṅkāvarttaka. Curiously, the sixteenth-century dynasty of Baudh (adjoining Sonepur) claims Sūryavaṃśa origin and descent from an ancestor who came from Ayodhyā. But this is so many centuries after the *Rāmāyaṇa* story that it is hardly feasible to regard it as evidence. This group of inscriptions does indicate that there was a tradition at least in medieval times of locating both the areas of Dakṣiṇa Kosala and Laṅkā on the route from central India to Kaliṅga, a likely battleground for those wishing to control the route. It should however be kept in mind that by now ties between Kaliṅga and Sri Lanka (Ceylon) were very close, to the extent of including dynastic links as well.[105] The use of the place name Laṅkā, therefore, may by now have had some connections with the island of Sri Lanka.

By the mid-first millennium AD the *Rāmāyaṇa* story had moved far away from its initial beginnings. Over the centuries it had also provided the base for a number of literary forms, pre-eminent among them being the plays of Bhāsa, *Abhiṣeka* and *Pratimā*, and the narrative poem of Kālidāsa, *Raghuvaṃśam*. With each of these literary excursions into the elegant refinement of courtly circles, the original epic receded further into the past. To search for the original epic would require the identification of the *rākṣasas* and the cause for the conflict, which continues to be a matter for speculation.

If the genesis of the conflict in the *Rāmāyaṇa* story lay in an antagonism between chiefships, then the Puranic sources suggest various possibilities. The *rākṣasas* of the Vālmīki story are linked with the Paulastyavaṃśa originating at Vaiśālī. The *aindra mahābhiṣeka* of one of the kings of Vaiśālī, Marutta, was interrupted by a Rāvaṇa.[106] One of Marutta's seven wives was a Cedi princess.[107] Tṛṇabindu, a later king of Vaiśālī, appears to have had some links with the Ikṣvākus.[108] His daughter Ilavilā (alternatively called Iḍaviḍa, Drāviḍa) married a *brahmarṣi* Pulastya and their son Viśravas was father to both Vaiśravaṇa Kubera from one of his wives and from another to Kumbhakarṇa, Daśagrīva, Vibhīṣaṇa and Śūrpaṇakhā.[109] It was in this generation that some of the Ailavilas migrated from Vaiśālī to the Vindhyan region. The relationship with Kubera has influenced the notion that Daśagriva Rāvaṇa had a Nāga identity. The kidnapping of princesses by *rākṣasas* was not an uncommon story in the Vaiśālī of these times[110] and one among these many stories may have been the prototype for the narrative of the kidnapping of Sītā. Was there a conflict between Kosala and Vaiśalī over the kidnapping of a princess? Or did the proximity of Kosala and Vaiśalī lead to warfare over claims to territorial rights for which the kidnapping of a princess provided an excellent excuse?

The continuing and more frequently mentioned antagonism was between the Haihayas and Ikṣvākus. Prior to this, Arjuna Kārtavīrya, a Haihaya, is said to have imprisoned Rāvaṇa of Laṅkā at Mahismatī on the Narmada and later released him.[111] The thousand-armed hero of the Haihayas claims boons from the *ṛṣis* and is among the most powerful of the *kṣatriyas*. The description given in the *Purāṇas*[112] is reminiscent of the description of Rāvaṇa in the epics. The enmity between the Bhārgavas (whose descendants are said to be among the major redactors of the Vālmīki *Rāmāyaṇa*) and the Haihayas is expressed in the killing of Arjuna Kārtavīrya by Rāma Jamadāgni and this event may well have been one of the layers which went into the making of the *Rāmāyaṇa* story. The Haihayas attacked and captured Ayodhyā and it was not until the rise of Sagara that the Ikṣvākus were able to re-establish themselves.[113] This major conflict would have extended the geographical area of the conflict into the Vindhyan region. The earliest Cedis were linked to the Yādava lineage and would therefore have had a connection with the Haihayas apart from being based in the Vindhyan region as well.[114] The later Cedis, claiming ancestry from the Kuru prince Vasu, controlled the southern bank of the Yamuna and the Ganga from Matsya to Magadha.[115] In a period of expanding territories and the forging of trade routes this would inevitably have brought them into conflict with kingdoms such as Kosala in the middle Ganga valley, also perhaps aiming at expanding southwards or capturing routes going south.[116] These episodes, the material of bardic tradition, would tend to be combined or sifted in accordance with folk memory and can therefore only be regarded as the possible fragments which went into the making of the epic.[117] It would seem though, that there might have been some association in folk memory between the Haihayas, the Cedis and the *rākṣasas* of the *Rāmāyaṇa* story.[118] Unlike the *Mahābhārata* where the theme of conflict, among chiefships, is very apparent, the Vālmīki *Rāmāyaṇa* papers it over in the fanciful descriptions of the *rākṣasas*. Significantly, where the *Mahābhārata* is classified as *itihāsa*, the *Rāmāyaṇa* is generally referred to as *kāvya*.

The epic forms a saga of heroes and focuses on chiefships and newly emerging kingdoms in competition over land, status and rights, although the ostensible reason in the narrative might well be the kidnapping of a princess or the losing of a game of dice. The rewriting of the story in a literary form often takes place at a time when the institution of the state is impinging on tribal chiefships or has already been established. In either case the emergence of the state requires legitimation from the past through legends and stories justifying its establishment. This takes at least two forms: first, there is the incorporation of new territory into the geographical circumference of epic events, where the territory on which the new state has been founded has to be described as having been rightfully conquered or settled; secondly, the legitimacy of the new rulers has to be ensured through mythology, genealogical links and events held to be significant in the tradition. Mythology is used to draw the territory and the personalities into a circle of known and familiar forms, kingship is used to establish links between the new rulers and the territory which is to be incorporated. The religious background is provided by those religions—Buddhism, Bhagavatism, and Jainism—which presuppose the emergence of the state and whose spread coincides with the establishing of monarchies, each with its court and capital and its access or aspiration to royal patronage.

In analysing the three versions of the *Rāmāyaṇa* story it may be suggested that they seem to reflect, among other things, the evolution of the state from oligarchies and chiefships to monarchies. The *Jātaka* stories appear to refer to an early period in that the geographical circumference is more restricted and the symbolic representation of social institutions carries traces of early forms. These stories do not develop into a Buddhist version of the *Rāmāyaṇa*. Probably such a version was not required if the context was one where origin myths sufficed and the absence of an established monarchical state did not demand an epic as a charter of validation. Although the *Jātakas* do describe monarchies, the flexibility of the system stands in contrast to that of the other texts and points to the *Jātaka* stories showing a greater familiarity with the *gaṇa-saṅgha* system. Most of the oligarchies in the Ganga valley with which Buddhism was associated declined as oligarchies and were converted or incorporated into monarchies. Even when Buddhism came to be linked with the monarchical system in its maturest form, the epic was not required since the Buddhist *saṅgha* had its own version of historical events to provide the validation, and association with the *saṅgha* became a form of legitimation: a case in point being the Buddhist version of the reign of the Mauryan king, Aśoka.

The transformation of the episodes into an epic probably coincided with the emergence of the monarchical state in Kosala. A distinction would then be drawn between the acceptability of the monarchical state and a degree of antagonism towards chiefships which were seen as a threat to the growing concentration of power in monarchical systems. The acceptability would then be endorsed by increasing emphases on the forms and stratification inherent to monarchy, as is evident from the Vālmīki *Rāmāyaṇa* as *kāvya*.

The main interest in the *Paumacariyam* from this point of view would then lie in its depicting the acceptance of monarchy in those very areas where previously there had been chiefships or at most the early and faltering forms of monarchy. There is a much sharper and stronger assertion of identity among the *rākṣasas* in this text than in the previous two. In the *Jātakas* they are primarily demons, goblins and magical beings and their role is minimal in the *Rāmāyaṇa* stories. The Vālmīki *Rāmāyaṇa* describes them both in terms of a normal human society as well as lurid creatures of the imagination. The *Paumacariyam* has no doubts about their being a recognizable human group with rights over a specific geographical area, governed by the institutions of a monarchical system. The conflict is a conflict among equals. This new identity in all its facets would have required a rewriting of the story to incorporate these changes.

The historical necessity of each version, therefore, would in turn reflect its function as a form of validation for a changing historical situation.

Notes and References

* Published in S.N. Mukherjee (ed.), *India: History and Thought*, Calcutta, 1982, 221–53.

1. *Sumaṅgala Vilāsinī*, I.76; *Papañca Sudānī*, I.163; *Cūlavaṃsa*, 6.42; 48.20; 75.59; 83.46. An earlier association of Rāvaṇa with Laṅkā occurs in the *Lankāvatārasūtra*

but no mention is made of the *Rāmāyaṇa* story. It has been suggested that this text may have been prior to the fifth century AD when portions of it were translated into Chinese. D.T. Suzuki, *The Lankāvatāra Sūtra*, London, 1932, p. xlii.

2. *Jayadissa Jātaka*, no. 513.
3. *Vessantara Jātaka*, no. 547.
4. V. Fausboll, *The Jātaka*, London, 1896, vol. VI, p. 558. The commentary describes Sītā as Rāma's sister who became his queen. But this is ambiguous for the reference to her being his sister is omitted in other commentaries.
5. Fausboll, *The Jātaka*, V.29.
6. *Sarabhañja Jātaka*, no. 522.
7. *Rāmāyaṇa*, II.57.
8. *Sāma Jātaka*, no. 540.
9. G. Malalasekera, *Dictionary of Pali Proper Names*, London, 1960, vol. 1, p. 165.
10. F.E. Pargiter, *Ancient Indian Historical Tradition*, London, 1922, p. 153.
11. Malalasekera, *Dictionary of Pali Proper Names*.
12. *Sadhina Jātaka*, no. 494.
13. *Suruci Jātaka*, no. 489.
14. *Mahā-ummaga Jātaka*, no. 546; *Vinīlaka Jātaka*, no. 160.
15. *Mahāpanāda Jātaka*, no. 264.
16. *Makhadeva Jātaka*, no. 9.
17. *Nimi Jātaka*, no. 541; *Kumbhakāra Jātaka*, no. 408.
18. *Mahājanaka Jātaka*, no. 539.
19. *Rāmāyaṇa*, I.5; I.6; 65.18–20; 69.2–3; II.61.6; 77.12–15.
20. *Gandhāra Jātaka*, no. 406.
21. Pargiter, *Ancient Indian Historical Tradition*, pp. 145ff.
22. Pargiter, *Ancient Indian Historical Tradition*, pp. 328–9.
23. *Dasaratha Jātaka*, no. 461; V. Fausboll, *The Dasaratha-Jataka, Being the Buddhist Story of King Rama*, Copenhagen, 1971.
24. Ambattha Sutta, *Dīgha Nikāya*, I.92; E. Senart (ed.), *Mahāvastu*, I, Paris, 1882–97, 348–52; *Sumaṅgala Vilāsinī*, I, pp. 258–62.
25. *Kuśi Jātaka*, no. 531.
26. P.L. Bhargava, 'The Original Home of the Ikṣvākus', *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, no. 1 (1976), pp. 64–6.
27. *Sumaṅgala Vilāsinī*, I.248. '... *kathanakāle ukkā viya mukhato pabhā niccharati* ...'
28. S. Beal, *Romantic History of Buddha*, London, 1907, pp. 18ff. This is also suggested in the *Cūlavaṃsa*, 87.34. This text also refers to Sagara and his 60,000 sons as among the descendants of Okkāka.
29. V. Pathak, *History of Kosala*, Varanasi, 1963, pp. 238ff. The Śakyas claim the Gautama *gotra* and the Mallas the Vasiṣṭha *gotra*. *Dīgha Nikāya*, II.160, 164ff. Manu refers to them as *vrātya-kṣatriyas*, X.22; XII.45.

30. *Sambula Jātaka*, no. 519.
31. *Vessantara Jātaka*, no. 547. The elephant and the cloud are regarded as synonymous, hence the elephant symbolizes rain. H. Zimmer, *Myths and symbols in Indian Art and Civilisation*, Princeton, 1972, pp. 102ff.
32. *Vedabbha Jātaka*, no. 48.
33. *Vessantara Jātaka*.
34. *Cetiya Jātaka*, no. 422.
35. Pargiter, *Ancient Indian Historical Tradition*, pp. 118ff.
36. D.C. Sircar, *Select Inscriptions*, 2nd edn, Calcutta, 1965, pp. 214ff. One view argues for a first century AD date for Khāravela. T.P. Varma, 'The Date of Kharavela and the Early Satavahanas', *Sri Lanka Journal of South Asian Studies*, I, no. 1 (June 1976), pp. 77–8. For the general use of the term *meghavāhana* by the Kaliṅga kings, see B.M. Barua, 'Minor Old Brahmi Inscriptions in the Udayagiri and Khandagiri Caves', *IHQ*, XIV (1938), pp. 158ff.
37. S. Falk Moore, 'Descent and Symbolic Filiation', *The American Anthropologist*, no. 66, part 1 (1964), pp. 1308–20.
38. H. Jacobi (tr.), *The Rāmāyaṇa*, Baroda, 1960; A.K. Warder, *Indian Kavya Literature*, Delhi, 1974, vol. II, pp. 76ff; R. Thapar, *Exile and the Kingdom: Some Thoughts on the Rāmāyaṇa*, Bangalore, 1978.
39. C. Bulcke, *Rāma-kātha*, Allahabad, 1971.
40. *The Mahābhārata*, Critical Edition, XII.57.40.
41. E.g., VII.30.
42. S. Bhattacharya, *The Indian Theogony*, Cambridge, 1970, pp. 249ff.
43. I.6.16ff; the killing of Śambuka by Rāma, VII.65; 67.
44. In the giving of gifts animal wealth takes precedence, as for example, in I.71.21.
45. I.38.19; VII.17.30.
46. I.5; I.6; I.65.18–20; I.68.2–3; I.31.4–7; II.61; II.77.12–15; VII.70.
47. E.g., II.64.16; II.28.7; VI.113.41; subsequent to Rāma's victory the gifts distributed are jewels, ornaments, gold and other precious gifts, VII.3.9–10.
48. I.5.14.
49. J.L. Brockington, 'Religious Attitudes in Vālmīki's *Rāmāyaṇa*', *JRAS*, no. 2 (1976), pp. 108–30.
50. A. Guruge, The *Society of the Rāmāyaṇa*, Saman Press, 1969.
51. Critical Edition, vol. I, p. 427; H.D. Sankalia, *Ramayana: Myth or Reality*, New Delhi, 1973.
52. Critical Edition, vol. IV, pp. xxxvi, xlviii–lxiii.IV.40.10–11, places Utkala, Avanti, Matsya and Kaliṅga in the southern region (Matsya/Vaṅga).
53. S.B. Deo and J.P. Joshi, *Pauni Excavation (1969–70)*, Nagpur, 1972, pp. 9ff.
54. Pargiter, *Ancient Indian Historical Tradition*, p. 279.
55. F.E. Pargiter, *Dynasties of the Kali Age*, Oxford, 1913, p. 51.

56. *The History and Culture of the Indian People*, vol. II, pp. 175–7. K.D. Bajpai, 'New Light on the Early Pandava Dynasty of Southern Kosala', *Annals of the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute*, vols LVIII–LIX (1977–78), pp. 433ff, summarizes the early evidence on Dakṣiṇa Kosala before the detailed discussion on the Pāṇḍava dynasty. The Cedi era has also been associated with the Megha dynasty, which would place them in the third century AD. K.D. Bajpai, 'The Meghas of Kauśāmbi and Southern Kośala and Allied Problems', *Indian Numismatic Chronicle*, part 1, vol. III, pp. 18ff.
57. The Allahabad *praśasti* of Samudra Gupta. J.F. Fleet (ed.), *Inscriptions of the Early Gupta Kings*, vol. 3 of *Corpus Inscriptionum Indicarum*, Varanasi, 1970, pp. 6ff. Arang Copper-plate Inscription of Bhimasena, *New History of the Indian People*, VI, pp. 85ff.
58. *The History and Culture of the Indian People*, vol. III, *The Classical Age*, pp. 177ff, 190ff, 217ff. V.V. Mirashi (ed.), *Inscriptions of the Kalachuri-Chedi Era*, in 2 parts, vol. IV of the *Corpus Inscriptionum Indicarum*, Ootacammund, 1955, part 1, pp. xxxiff.
59. *Rāmāyaṇa*, I.69.17; I.70; Pargiter, *Ancient Indian Historical Tradition*, p. 145.
60. *Rāmāyaṇa*, VII.2–5; 9; Pargiter, *Ancient Indian Historical Tradition*, pp. 241ff.
61. *Rāmāyaṇa*, I.8.
62. Cf. Pargiter, *Ancient Indian Historical Tradition*, pp. 145–7; *Viṣṇu Purāṇa*, IV.5; IV.2.
63. *Rāmāyaṇa*, II.43.7ff.
64. *Rāmāyaṇa*, V.41.12; 46.14.
65. *Rāmāyaṇa*, I.5; II.17; V.16.5; VI.24.20. The difference in the economic base between Kosala and Laṅkā has been discussed in Devaraj Chanana, *The Spread of Agriculture in Northern India*, New Delhi, 1963, pp. 27–9.
66. *Rāmāyaṇa*, I.8.11ff; II.61.7ff; II.94; II.73.8; 95.2; 102–30.
67. I am using the term 'chiefship' here not in the sense of a primitive society, but as a stratified society with social and economic differentiation and ruled by an oligarchy. The differentiation would not be as marked as in a monarchical system nor would there be the same concentration of power in the hands of the king.
68. V.M. Kulkarni, *Vimalasūri Paumacariyam*, Varanasi, 1962, Introduction; 'Origin and Development of the Rama Story in Jaina Literature', *Journal of the Oriental Institute*, IX, no. 2, pp. 189–204; H. Jacobi, 'Some Ancient Jaina Works', *Modern Review*, December 1914; *Pariśiṣṭaparvan*, Introduction, p. xix, Bib. Ind., no. 96, Calcutta, 1932; K.H. Dhruva, 'Jaina Yuga', I, part 2, 1981, V.S. pp. 68ff, part 5, pp. 180–1.
69. *Paumacariyam*, II. 1–20.
70. *Paumacariyam*, II.104–16; III.7–8.
71. *Paumacariyam*, VII.1–13.

72. *Paumacariyam*, III.14–15.
73. J.C. Jain, *Life in Ancient India*, Bombay, 1947, pp. 354–5; B.C. Law, *India as Described in Earlier Texts of Buddhism and Jainism*, London, 1941, pp. 106ff.
74. Hemacandra, *Trṣaṣṭiśalākāpuruṣacaritra*, vol. VII, pp. 173ff. The Vindhyacala hill is located in Mirzapur and is crowned by the temple of Vinduvāsinī. The town of Vindhyacala also known as Pampāpura lies near Mirzapur. B.C. Law, *Historical Geography of Ancient India*, Paris, 1954, p. 134. Ptolemy refers to the Vindhyas as Oiundon. The range includes Ṛkṣavat (the Ouxenton of Ptolemy), Vindhya and Pāripātra, Jain, *Life in Ancient India*, p. 301.
75. *Paumacariyam*, V.126.
76. *Paumacariyam*, XLIII–XLVI.
77. *Paumacariyam*, V.1–2.
78. *Paumacariyam*, V.14–46.
79. *Paumacariyam*, V.126ff.
80. *Paumacariyam*, V.14–46.
81. *Paumacariyam*, VI.70–92.
82. *Paumacariyam*, VI.42. '*vānarangana sadatto mānuṣāyāre* ...'.
83. This is also suggested in passing in the *Rāmāyaṇa* where the *rākṣasas* and the *vānaras* are said to be like brothers, V.49.2–3.
84. V.50–168. The Jaina version of the Puranic legend states that Sagara and his 60,000 sons dug a ditch to protect certain Jaina shrines and the sons were burnt to ashes whereupon Sagara became a *muni*.
85. *Paumacariyam*, XII.143; XLIV.29.
86. *Paumacariyam*, XXVII.
87. *Paumacariyam*, XXIX–XXXI.
88. As for example, *Paumacariyam*, XXXIV, XXXVII.
89. *Paumacariyam*, XXXI.40–53.
90. *Paumacariyam*, XXXVIII.51ff.
91. *Paumacariyam*, IV.64ff.
92. *Paumacariyam*, V.81–92; VI.1–45.
93. *Paumacariyam*, V.154–6.
94. The *Paumacariyam* does not link the *rākṣasas* with the Paulastyas as in the *Purāṇas* and the *Rāmāyaṇa*, unless it can be suggested that the name Vidyādhara is indicative of magical power and knowledge, generally associated with the *ṛṣis*. Vidyādhara does echo the epithet of *yātudhāna* used for the *rākṣasas* in the *Rāmāyaṇa*, III.25; VI.60.
95. V.V. Mirashi, *Inscriptions of the Kalachuri-Chedi Era*, part 1, pp. 1ff.
96. F.E. Pargiter, *The Ancient Indian Historical Tradition*, London, 1922, pp. 197ff.
97. Aerial chariots are part of the dream world of many cultures, but here a distinction is made between the ability to fly and the possession of aerial chariots and the latter are associated with particular groups of people. Vasu, the

Kuru prince who conquered Cedi is called Uparicara because Indra presented him with a celestial chariot which enabled him to move through the sky (*Mahābhārata*, I.63). This gift was made in appreciation of the *tapas* performed by Vasu. Yayāti had a similar chariot and this was acquired by Vasu (*Vāyu Purāṇa*, II.31.18ff). The *Samkicca Jātaka* refers to Cecca/Cedi who once could tread the air. These legends are similar to those of Rāvaṇa and his *puṣpaka vimāna* and may well derive in part from the title Meghavāhana. Another Vidyādhara prince is called Jimutavāhana who also takes the epithet of being 'sky-roaming' (*Kathāsaritasāgara*, XXII.17).

Guṇāḍhya in the *Bṛhatkathā* refers to *vidyādhara* as one who is familiar with magic (A.K. Warder, *Indian Kavya Literature*, II, p. 123) which might also link it with *vijjadhara* meaning a sorcerer. Indra is on occasion also described as *meghavāhana*—he who rides a cloud. Curiously, *meghavaḥini* refers to lightning which would link it up with *vajra* and the association of Indra with *vajra* is well known. The *vajra* in sculpture is depicted rather like a shortened and double-headed *triśula* with the points curved inwards. In this game of symbols based on lightning and clouds many associations rise to the surface but remain unclear. In one of the Kalacuri Inscriptions, the Haihaya ancestry is written as *Ahihaya* (*Epigraphia Indica*, II. p. 230). Ahi is the serpent in the sky, among other things (Monier-Williams, *Sanskrit-English Dictionary*, p. 125), perhaps a poetic description of lightning as it is depicted on occasions in miniature paintings. The word *airavati* also refers to lightning and Indra's mount is the elephant Airavat, which again would bring in the link with *meghavāhana/meghavaḥni*. If there is a link between these, then could one perhaps suggest that the Cedi inscriptions from Kaliṅga where the kings take the title of *aira* may have to do with this symbolism rather than the lineage connections with the Aila or Candravaṃśi lineage as has been suggested, although they did, as descendants of Vasu, belong to the Aila lineage? (B.M. Barua, 'Hathigumpha Inscription of Kharavela', *IHQ*, vol. XIV [1938], pp. 459–85.) What adds to the puzzle is that the etymology of Cedi is uncertain, yet there is a P. Dr. form *ceti*, meaning a bright light [*Dravidian Etymological Dictionary* (DED), 2271], which could perhaps refer again to lightning. Evidently the symbolism of dark clouds, the thunderbolt and lightning had some interconnection in relation to tribal and clan names and titles taken by chiefs and kings, as also perhaps the god Indra. Possibly the denigration of Indra in some sections of the epics had to do with the rise and fall of tribal deities as well.

S.K. Chatterjee suggested that the name Khāravela may be derived from P. Dr. *kār/kar* meaning 'black and terrible' and *vel* meaning 'lance', and the equivalent in Sanskrit being *kṛṣṇa-arṣti* (*Vyāsasaṃgrahama*, 1933, pp. 71–4. Quoted in D.C. Sircar, *Select Inscriptions*, p. 214). The two components of the name in P. Dr. carry the homonyms of 'cloud', DED, 1073, and 'lightning', DED, 4524, as also in the latter case 'chief or hero', DED, 4562. The association of cloud and lightning occurs in the use of names incorporating *megha* and *vajra* among the *rākṣasas* as also the epithet, *nīlameghanimbham* (*Rāmāyaṇa*, VI.70.6). The association with *vel* 'lance'/'spear' or 'chief may link the name to protection. Curiously one of the Matsya chiefs is called Māvela which would also be translated as *kṛṣṇa-arṣṭi* (*mā* meaning 'black', DED, 3918). If one may further add to the speculation, the name Kalacuri/Katacuri is again of uncertain etymology. Rājaśekhara writes it as Karaculi (Mirashi, *Inscriptions of the Kalachuri-Chedi Era*, pp. xliv-lxxi) and also Kalacuri. Could this name also be a variant of 'black' (*kara* or *kala*) 'spear' (*śūli*)? If the compound is meant to convey a spear moving through a black cloud, then the association with lightning would not be unlikely. In the context of the suggestion that the dark, rain-bearing cloud and the elephant are synonymous symbols, it may be worth pointing out that the P. Dr. *mā* means 'black' (DED, 3918), 'a large animal, horse or elephant or deer' (DED, 3917) and 'great, great man' (DED, 3923), though the third meaning is restricted. If the termination *vela* in names such as Khāravela, Māvela, etc. can be regarded as a Prakṛtized form of a P. Dr. word, then it might also have been derived from *vel* (DED, 4524) meaning 'white, shining, light' which could indicate lightning.

It has been suggested that Rāvaṇa is not a personal name but a Sanskritized form of a Dravidian word *irāvan/irauvan* meaning god, king, sovereign, lord. It would thus be a title used by more than one person which might account for the reference to more than one Rāvaṇa in Puranic sources (Pargiter, *Ancient Indian Historical Tradition*, p. 242). A P. Dr. form *iraivan* is listed as no. 448 in the *Dravidian Etymological Dictionary*. Pargiter suggests that Daśagrīva may have been a Sanskritized form of a personal name of such a Rāvaṇa which gave rise to the fable that he had ten heads (*Ancient Indian Historical Tradition*, p. 277). In the context of the symbolism discussed above, could the name Rāvaṇa have derived additional sanction by being linked with the form *airāvan*?

The etymology of *rākṣasa* remains obscure. The root *rakṣ* carries the double meaning of injury and protection and *ārakṣaka* provides the meaning of he who guards or protects. This could be symbolically linked with the association with spears and lances as weapons of protection. The link with lightning remains unexplained as also with flying. In the Indian tradition, the ability to fly perhaps carries a shamanistic connection. (M. Eliade, *Shamanism*, Princeton, 1974.) Thus the *Ṛgveda* mentions the *keśin* flying through the air (X.136). The *Dīpavaṃsa* and the *Mahāvaṃsa* also refer to the Buddha's three flying visits to Sri Lanka prior to the arrival of Vijaya. Did the *rākṣasas* as practitioners of *yātudhāna* carry echoes of shamanistic religious forms?

98. *Pariśiṣṭaparvan*, VIII. pp. lxxi, 415ff.
99. G. Buhler, 'New Jaina Inscriptions from Mathura', *Ep. Ind.*, I, Calcutta, 1892, pp. 371ff; *Pariśiṣṭaparvan*, I. pp. 393ff; *Pariśiṣṭaparvan*, II. pp. 195ff; V.A. Smith, *The Jaina Stupa and Other Antiquities of Mathura*, Varanasi, 1969, rpt.; V.S. Agrawala, 'Catalogue of the Mathura Museum, Jaina *tīrthaṅkaras* and Other Miscellaneous Figures', *Journal of the Uttar Pradesh Historical Society*, XXIII (1950), pp. 36ff.
100. K.D. Bajpai, 'Development of Jaina Art in Madhya Pradesh', *JIH*, LV (December 1977); U.P. Shah, *Jaina Art and Architecture*, vol. 1, p. 128; J.F. Fleet, *Inscriptions of the Early Gupta Kings*, pp. 258ff; V.V. Mirashi, *Inscriptions of the Kalachuri-Chedi Era*, pp. clxi–ii.
101. Mirashi, *Inscriptions of the Kalachuri-Chedi Era*, pp. clvff.
102. However, the earliest use of an era which is identified later with the Cedi era comes from western India and its use in the Cedi country belongs to a later date. Mirashi, *Inscriptions of the Kalachuri-Chedi Era*, viiiff.
103. The Bilhari Stone Inscription of Yuvarajadeva, Goharwa Plates of Karṇa, Banaras Plates of Karṇa, Mirashi, *Inscriptions of the Kalachuri-Chedi Era*, pp. 210, 241.
104. B.C. Mazumdar, 'Mahada Plates of Yogeśvaradevavarman', *Ep. Ind.*, XII, no. 25, p. 218; 'Sonpur Plates of Kumara Someśvaradeva', *Ep. Ind.*, XII, no. 29, p. 237; 'Ratnapura Stone Inscription of Jajalladeva', *Ep. Ind.*, I, pp. 32ff.
105. Apart from the controversy of whether Vijaya came to Sri Lanka from Kaliṅga, ties between the two regions were formally mentioned in the sources stating that the Tooth Relic was sent to Sri Lanka from Kaliṅga in the early fourth century AD. This was followed by a series of matrimonial alliances from the tenth century onwards, when some of the most powerful kings of Polonnaruwa claimed Kaliṅgan ancestry (S. Paranavitana, 'The Kalinga Dynasty of Ceylon', *Journal of the Greater India Society*, vol. III, no. 1, January 1936, pp. 57–64). The twelfth-century Galpota Slab Inscription of Nissaṃkamalla (*Epigraphia Zeylonica*, II, no. 17, pp. 98ff) combines various claims to legitimacy on the part of this Kaliṅga prince who was called upon to succeed to the throne at Polonnaruwa, claims which echo many facets of what has been discussed in this paper. He invokes Vijaya as being linked with the *Kaliṅga-cakravarti-kula*, the latter having the ability of travelling through the air (*ākāśacśri*) and belonging to the royal line of the Okkāka-rājā. Evidently by now the lineage lines had got crossed! Curiously, the capital from where he ruled, Polonnaruwa, is also referred to as Pulasti-pura. (I am grateful to Dr Sirima Kiribamune for drawing my attention to this inscription.) In the light of the above, could it perhaps be argued that the identification of Laṅkā with Sri Lanka dates to the period of these connections?

It is significant that there are a series of names applied to Sri Lanka which are directly and indirectly referred to in the *Dīpavaṃsa*. In the earliest times the names Oja, Vara, and Maṇḍa are used (I.73). The name Sinhala derives from the lion ancestry of Vijaya and his original home (IX). Vijaya and his companions give the name of Tāmraparṇi to the island because of its copper-coloured soil and this may have been the origin of the word Taprobane used by the Greeks. (IX.20–30; Pliny, *Hist. Nat.*, VI.24.1.) The *Dīpavaṃsa* also refers to it as Laṅkā, but the date of the text is *circa* fifth century AD so that the name Laṅkā appears to be late. Was the change in name in any way linked to connections with Kaliṅga?

106. *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa*, VIII.21; *Rāmāyaṇa*, VII.18.
107. *Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa*, 131.
108. Y. Mishra, *An Early History of Vaiśālī*, Delhi, 1962, pp. 52ff.
109. Mishra, *An Early History of Vaiśālī*, pp. 59ff.
110. Mishra, *An Early History of Vaiśālī*, p. 79.
111. Pargiter, *Ancient Indian Historical Tradition*, p. 266.
112. *Viṣṇu Purāṇa*, IV.11.
113. Pargiter, *Ancient Indian Historical Tradition*, pp. 153ff.
114. Pargiter, *Ancient Indian Historical Tradition*, pp. 102–3.
115. Pargiter, *Ancient Indian Historical Tradition*, pp. 118–19.
116. To search for an archaeological correlation for the events of the Vālmīki *Rāmāyaṇa* is therefore almost a search for a chimera; at most it may be possible to correlate episodes. Conflicts between chiefships would relate to a period of the chalcolithic cultures just prior to the spread of the NBP. But urban centres and royal courts would be of a later date. The description of Ayodhyā in the late sections of the text would be of a later period.
117. The choice of Rāma as the hero of the Ikṣvākus also needs some explanation. Was there already a legend on the heroic exploits of Rāma which was elaborated upon in the epic? Strangely, the *Jātaka* literature does not project Rāma as an epic hero but this may have to do with its Buddhist context. The reign of Rāma seems to mark a terminal point in the history of Ayodhyā and a point of change in the history of Kosala. Lava succeeds Rāma in Uttara Kosala but the capital is shifted to Srāvastī which then becomes the more important city. It has also been suggested that Rāma's reign marks the terminal point between the Tretā and Dvāpara *yugas* (Pargiter, *Ancient Indian Historical Tradition*, p. 177). It is not until the time of Praśenajit that one hears of Kosala playing a significant historical role again. Was the projection of Rāma as an epic hero entirely imaginary but influenced by the feats of Rāma Jāmadagnya, Sagara and other earlier heroes?
118. More recent claimants to Haihaya descent in the Vindhyan area are the Gonds of Garha-Mandla (C. von Fuhrer Haimendorf, *The Raj Gonds of*

Adilabad, London, 1948, pp. 1ff.) A sixteenth-century Gond king also claimed to be of the Paulastyavaṃśa (J.C. Ghosh, 'Ravana's Lanka Located in Central India', *IHQ*, V, no. 2, June 1928, pp. 255–6). The parallels between Gond society and the descriptions of the *Rākṣasas* in the Vālmīki *Rāmāyaṇa* have been suggested by various scholars, e.g., G. Ramadas, 'Ravana and his Tribes', *IHQ*, V, no. 2 (June 1929), pp. 281–98; *IHQ*, VI (1930), pp. 284ff.

5

*Death and the Hero**

Scattered across the Indian subcontinent are large numbers of memorial stones dedicated to men who have died in an act of heroism such as defending a village against raiders by land or by sea, or defending cattle against cattle-lifters, or who have died on the battle-field. Such stones have come to be called hero-stones and have quite recently attracted the attention of historians, archaeologists and anthropologists. Associated with them are the *satī*-stones, memorials commemorating the wives who have immolated themselves either on the funeral pyres of their husbands or on hearing of the death of their husbands in battle. Both these categories of memorial are in origin associated with the cult of the hero and date back to times when society was suffused with the ethics of the heroic age.

These stones are of more than archaeological interest since the concept underlying the monument not only relates to the changing perception of the death of a hero, but also indicates an important variant of what is generally described as 'the Indian' view of death and the after-life. The latter derives from the high culture of Brahmanical texts and practice, whereas the cult of the hero-stone is clearly a substratum cult, but with a widely distributed following. That historians and archaeologists have until recently tended to ignore this cult may also be partially explained by its being culturally a substratum cult and by the fact that it contradicts the neat generalisations culled from the classical Sanskrit texts.

The location of the hero-stones is neither geographically uniform nor arbitrary. They are found in larger numbers in western India (Rajasthan, Gujarat and Maharashtra), central India (Madhya Pradesh and the southern edges of the Ganga valley) and in south India (Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Kerala and Tamil Nadu). Northern and eastern India generally register fewer examples. Topographically and ecologically there is a frequency of such memorials in upland areas, in the vicinity of passes across hills, and in areas regarded traditionally as frontier zones which often included primarily pastoral regions, the outskirts of forests and the edges of what have come to be called the 'tribal areas of central India'. Hero-stones are relatively infrequent in the large agricultural tracts of the Indus and Ganga valleys and in the agriculturally rich delta areas of the peninsula.

The origin of the hero-stones remains obscure. They may possibly derive from the menhirs of the megalithic cultures in India of the first millennium BC (Srinivasan 1946; Sontheimer 1976). Their geographical distribution in the Indian peninsula seems to coincide with that of megalithic settlements, but the latter extend further into other areas as well. India is a country of startling cultural survivals: the single menhir of stone or wood is still erected as a memorial (not necessarily over a grave) among the Marias of central India and the Khasis of the north-eastern hills. Another megalithic association is suggested by the occurrence of hero-stones in groups, rather like a graveyard, on the edges of settlements. However, the single stone can be located anywhere. The megalithic necropolis would suggest burials linked perhaps through kinship and possibly associated further by common claims to clan rights and land ownership.

The form of the hero-stone changed through time and the change was related to the status of the hero as well as to the action performed by him. The simplest stone was a flat slab on which was depicted the hero armed with a bow and arrow or a sword. The hero of higher status rode a horse and the trappings of the horse indicate status. The association of cattle or a wild animal such as a tiger would point to the hero dying in a cattle raid or mauled by a tiger. Some stones also depict one or two objects which it is thought had a role in religious ritual, and on occasion a brief inscription is added containing the minimum information on the hero. Such simple stones have been dated to the mid-first millennium AD and continue into later centuries.

Towards the end of the first millennium AD the style of the hero-stone in many areas changed and became far more elaborate. The stone could now be either a slab, as before, or else a square column up to two metres in height with panels sculptured on all four sides. The shape of the stone came to resemble a small shrine with a decorative design on the top (Mate and Gokhale 1971; Sontheimer 1976). The three or more sculptured panels had a recognisable theme. The sun and the moon were sculpted at the top signifying the eternal character of the memorial and below that the act in which the hero died. Inscriptions of this period recording grants of land often state that the grant would last 'as long as the moon and the sun endure', a phrase which signified that the grant could not be revoked. The symbolism would also relate to timelessness, a condition which the hero, when deified, would share with the gods. The highest panel carried the symbols of the religious sect to which the hero belonged: thus the *lingam* and the *yoni*, indicating phallic worship, were the symbols of a Śaivite sect to which sometimes the bull vehicle of Śiva was added; the standing or seated figure of Mahāvīra would indicate a Jaina devotee. The hero might even be shown worshipping at the shrine. The second panel depicted the veneration of the hero, or else the hero being carried in a palanquin by celestial maidens (*apsarās*), presumably towards heaven. The lower panels provide the narrative of the incident. The hero is shown fighting either on foot or on horseback duly armed with a bow and arrow or a sword, spear and shield. He is frequently surrounded by enemies, some of whom he has killed. In other cases the panels show stampeding cattle. In the coastal areas along the west coast sea battles with ships are more frequent. Except in rare cases of lengthy eulogies, where inscriptions occur on such stones they provide a minimum of information giving the name of the hero, perhaps mentioning the king of the region and a brief word of praise for the action.

The names in the earlier inscriptions suggest persons of lesser status, soldiers and guardians of the village, who died fighting against cattle-lifters, marauders or invading armies on the rampage in the countryside (Vanamamalai 1975). Many of the earlier stones from Tamil Nadu come from North Arcot District which is known to have been at that time an area of livestock breeding where cattle-raiding would be one method of increasing wealth. The change in the style of the hero-stone seems to reflect a change in the status of the hero being memorialised. The elaborate stones commemorated heroes who claimed to belong to the upper caste groups, often claiming *kṣatriya* status—it being the function of the *kṣatriya* in the caste hierarchy to protect the other sections of the society. The indication of the hero's religious sect may have been due to the influence of the *bhakti* (devotional religion) sects which were popular at this time. The hero travelling to heaven and being thus rewarded, was an essential element in the cult of the hero from early times.

The earliest descriptions of hero-stones in literary sources come from the Tamil *Śaṅgam* literature, generally ascribed to the period between 300 BC and AD 200 but possibly including interpolations of a later period. The *vīra-kal* or *Vīra-k-kal* is, literally, hero-stone, and is also referred to as *naḍukal*, the planted stone (Subrahmanian 1966b). The stone, it is stated, commemorates a hero who has been killed in battle. The disembodied soul is regarded as powerful and could use its power for good or ill. It had a tendency to return to its kinsfolk unless it was appeased with rituals and the setting up of a stone, and these in turn were the means by which the power of the soul was appropriated by the kinsfolk. The cutting of a specially selected stone, which was believed to embody the soul of the hero, was begun on an auspicious day (Vanamamalai 1975). When cut it was erected under a shady tree, bathed and purified and then inscribed. It now became an object of worship and the hero was immortalised both in the stone and in the songs and ballads composed about him. The stone was decorated with flowers and peacock feathers. The hero's spear and shield were placed close to it and the whole enclosed in a canopy of cloth. At regular intervals food specially cooked for the purpose was offered at the stone. Those going into battle sought the blessings of the hero by worshipping at the stone.

The symbolism of the objects associated with the ritual suggests various other links. The spear associated with the hero is also the symbol of the god Murugan whose priests carried a spear (Subrahmanian 1966a). Murugan as Kārtikeya was worshipped as the god of war who killed the *asuras* (demons), was the lover and abductor of Valli and was the god of the hill-top.[1] His vehicle was the peacock which was sometimes depicted on his banner, as was the cock. There are two major legends regarding his origin. The *Mahābhārata* (III.213ff) narrates that the gods required a hero to lead them in the war against the demon Taraka and for this purpose Skanda was born as the son of the great god Śiva and his wife Pārvatī (Bhattacharya 1970). Skanda was also known by the names of Kumāra, Mahāsena and Kārtikeya. Another version of the story links his birth to those who are associated with the worship of the ancestors. It is said that Agni, the god of fire, dropped his seed on the banks of the Ganga and the six sisters known as the Kṛittikas nurtured it and Kārtikeya was born with six heads. The Kṛittikas are connected with fertility and the month of Kārttika is both the time of the harvest and the time of worshipping ancestors with the lighting of lamps. The ritual period of the *śrāddha*, when ceremonies are performed for the ancestors and for those recently dead, and specially prepared food is fed to selected *brāhmaṇas*, precedes the month of Kārttika. Rituals related to the worship of ancestors and the feeding of *brāhmaṇas* at the time of the *śrāddha* would also involve a display of wealth and of redistributive activities, this being one of the auspicious occasions for making gifts to worthy *brāhmaṇas*, who in turn ensured the well-being of departed souls.

Whereas in south India the references to hero-stones in literary sources seem to be earlier than their archaeological counterparts, in other areas of the country the archaeological finds predate the references in literature which are generally fairly late. Hero-stones in western Rajasthan referred to as *kīrti-stambha*—literally, pillars of fame—go back to the seventh century AD but a larger number are of the eleventh century and later (Agrawala 1963). Many depict cattle raids and cleverly use a well-known legend to symbolise the protection of cattle.[2]

The hero-stones from Saurashtra and other parts of Gujarat are called *pāliya*, the etymology of the word being perhaps connected with *pāla*, the protector or guardian. The *pāliya-bhumi*, the place where several hero-stones are placed together, is often on the outskirts of the village and preferably on the bank of a river (Fischer and Shah 1970). Those linked to the local ruling family may have their stones in the courtyard of the temple. The sculptured side generally faces east. The stones are worshipped annually at the time of Dipāvali, the festival when lamps are lit and which marks the autumn harvest and the start of the winter, which falls in the month of Kārttika. Those who claim descent from the hero also worship the stone on other occasions such as the period of the *śrāddha* and at the time of a marriage in the family. In the ritual connected with the setting up of a hero-stone, peacock feathers are important but the spear is absent.

Associated with the hero-stone are other memorial stones which may be regarded as complementary in some cases and subsidiary in others. Memorials to wives who have immolated themselves on the death of their husbands or have become *satīs* (virtuous ones) are complementary to the hero-stone and sometimes the two memorials are combined in one. Occasionally in one of the panels of the hero-stone, there is a representation of both husband and wife on the funeral pyre (Sontheimer 1976). However, the *satī*-stone is generally an independent memorial.

Śaṅgam literature refers to *satī* as the condition of literally falling into flames; it is associated generally with the wife of the warrior, although on occasion other women are also said to have undergone the ritual of self-immolation (Subrahmanian 1966b). The memorial is referred to as the *satī -kal* (*satī*-stone) or the *mā-sati -k-kal* and appears to have been the counterpart of the *vīra-k-kal* of the hero or the chief. The explanation for both kinds of memorials is that they symbolise loyalty to a person, the hero to his chief and the wife to her husband, and the preservation of honour. That it was also considered a possible ritual for the wife of the dead hero is apparent from a different source, the epic *Mahābhārata* where the wives of some of the heroes are said to have immolated themselves on the death of their husbands (Kane 1941: 623ff). A later source refers to all the widows of the Yādava clansmen becoming *satīs*. Texts of the second millennium AD debated whether such an act should be regarded as suicide, and therefore condemned, or as an act of merit, and therefore recommended.

The *satī*-stone depicted the right arm of a woman, bent at the elbow at a right angle with an open hand whose palm faced out. The arm could be shown tied to a post or free. The forearm is covered with bangles and occasionally a lime is held in the hand. The sun and the moon are depicted on either side and signify eternity as in the case of the hero-stone. Sometimes an auspicious symbol such as the *svāstika* is also added. A brief inscription may mention the date and the names of the woman and of her husband. The right arm indicates purity and the condition *of satī*. It has also been suggested that it represents one of the high castes since in some rare cases the left arm replaces the right (Sontheimer 1976). The post probably does not point to the woman having been tied to the post before immolation because the ritual demanded that she sit on the pyre with her dead husband's head in her lap. The post may well signify the act of sacrifice since in the Vedic sacrificial ritual the sacrificial offering was tied to the post (*yūpa*). The open hand and the lime symbolise the absence of evil, and tradition has it that they both scare away the demons. A woman normally has to break her bangles on the death of her husband and a widow is recognised by this. The prominence given to the bangles in the *satī*-stone emphasises that the *satī* is not to be regarded as a widow since she remains a wife to her husband, having following him in death. *satī*-stones were also frequently worshipped, the *satī* being regarded as a deity. She was required to bless the assembly before stepping onto the funeral pyre and her curse was greatly feared. In some cases *satī*-stones have come to be the centre for the sanctum of large temples such as the one Jhunjhunu in Rajasthan.

As in the case of the hero-stones, the frequency of *satī*-stones also dates to the period after the mid-first millennium AD. Among the earliest epigraphical references to a *satī* is that to the wife of a chief, Goparāja, who died in battle in the early sixth century AD (Fleet 1970). The inscription appears on what seems to be an elaborate hero-stone memorial in the form of a *liṅgam* (phallus) indicating Śaiva associations. *Satī*-stones increase in number towards the end of the millennium. The largest archaeological finds date to more recent centuries. Where castes are mentioned, the majority claim *kṣatriya* status, and they therefore belong to the landowning castes who linked themselves to the best known lineages of earlier times.

Subsidiary memorials, not unrelated to the hero-stone, are those which are meant to appease the spirit of the dead. The setting up of these stones or wooden memorials follows a pattern similar to that of the hero-stones.[3] The significance of these memorials for this discussion lies in the method of their being made and erected for much the same ritual was probably carried out for the hero-stone and the *satī*-stone. The ritual is performed by the *bhagat* or local cult priest and not by a *brāhmaṇa*, thus emphasising the substratum nature of the cult. The role of the *bhagat* is important since it links the action to the Little Tradition. None of the texts refer to the *brāhmaṇa* performing the ritual for erecting the hero-stone or the *satī*-stone. Doubtless the more elaborate rituals of the high caste *kṣatriya* immortalised in a hero-stone may well have been performed by *brāhmaṇas* but this may not have applied to the more primitive hero-stone.[4]

Echoes of the hero-stone ritual can also be observed in the worship of cult deities such as Aiyanar (Whitehead 1921). As the guardian of the village, Aiyanar rides a horse and is sometimes represented only by a clay image of a horse, but is invariably surrounded by clay images of the heroes who assist him. The ensemble is placed on the outskirts of a village under a large tree. Offerings of food are made by the villagers to the heroes, the food being eventually eaten by the cult priest who is usually not a *brāhmaṇa*. Sheep, goats and fowls are also offered and after the sacrifice the priest keeps the head whilst the body is taken by the worshipper. At the annual festival the image is washed in a liquid paste made from a number of ingredients and the figure draped in red cloth. The ritual at this time is in imitation of the worship of images in the temples dedicated to various Hindu deities more familiar to the upper castes.

The differentiation between the hero-stone and the memorial to the spirit of a dead man has its counterpart in the death rituals of what may be called the Hinduism of the higher castes. The early texts on domestic rituals mention two categories of rituals for the dead (Ap. D.S. II.7.16.1–3; Apte 1954). The lesser category relates to the *pretas*, those recently dead whose spirits may still be hovering among the living and who have to be appeased and set to rest by a series of ceremonies. The more important rituals are dedicated to the *pitṛs*, the ancestors in the patrilineage for whom rites are performed, particularly during the annual calendrical period of the *śrāddha* when food is offered to the ancestors to nourish them and when *brāhmaṇas* are fed. Whereas the first category of ritual grows out of a fear of the *preta* and the need to propitiate him and convert him into a friendly ancestor, the second is essentially born out of the need to nurture the souls of the ancestors and to maintain a tradition of remembrance. It is assumed that the ancestors are living in heaven, for the dead are nourished in heaven by the food given at the *śrāddha*. Such a concept would seem to conflict with that of a cycle of rebirth and reincarnation. Some texts seek to explain this contradiction by arguing that the food reaches the ancestor whether he be identified with the gods or reborn in some other form. Such rituals seem to reflect an early and continuing belief in heaven and hell which is interwoven into the concept of reincarnation.

Implicit in the notion of the hero-stone is also the interweaving of various customs regarding the disposal of the dead. Both the Vedic texts and the *Śaṅgam* literature assume the coexistence of a variety of methods. The dead can be cremated, buried, cast away or exposed. Gradually cremation became the norm in the high culture. The *asuras*, opposed to the practices of the *āryas* in many instances, were known to bury their dead in stone structures beneath the earth (*Ṛgveda* X.18; *Atharvaveda* XVII.2.34; *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* XIII.8.1–4). This may be a reference to megalithic burials in stone cists. The range suggests the continuance of earlier forms of burial together with cremation. The memorials, to the extent that they symbolise a grave, are suggestive of the notion of burial even when the actual disposal may have been cremation.

The firm faith in the belief that the hero lived in heaven after he died suggests the popularity of an alternative to the belief in reincarnation. This is particularly striking in the centuries AD when the doctrine of reincarnation was widely accepted. Living in heaven was in a sense the termination of a cycle of lives, although this is not stated. Heaven was essential in any case if the hero was to be deified, which seems to have been a recognised tradition. The grammarian Pāṇini, composing his grammar in the fifth century BC, states that distinguished *kṣatriya* heroes become the objects of religious devotion (IV.3.99). Deification is perhaps most evident in the concept of the *pañca-vīras* or five heroes of the Vṛṣṇis, a sub-clan of the Yādavas.[5] The pre-eminent family among the Vṛṣṇis was that of Vasudeva, and three generations of his descendants—sons, grandson and great-grandson—are deified as the five Vṛṣṇi heroes. Among them one, Kṛṣṇa Vāsudeva, was to be identified as the *avatāra* or incarnation of the god Viṣṇu. Tradition maintains that Kṛṣṇa Vāsudeva has a pastoral association, his early life being spent among the cattle keepers of Mathura. It was also around the cult of the *pañca-vīras* and Kṛṣṇa Vāsudeva that there developed one stream of the *bhakti* movement of devotional religion which has come to be called Bhāgvatism. There appears to be a curious intertwining of the cult of the hero with pastoralism and with the emergence of some devotional sects.

The transformation of a hero-stone into a deity can be seen in the cult of Viṭṭhobā at Paṇḍharpur (in Maharashtra), in the suggestion that the image now worshipped was in origin a hero-stone and the hero was gradually changed into a deity and given a new iconography, in keeping with his incorporation into the cult of Kṛṣṇa Vāsudeva (Deleury 1960; Tulpule 1977–8). Paṇḍharpur was located in the pastoral zone of the western Deccan and the pastoral appeal of the Kṛṣṇa cult would have attracted to it the local people. The evolution of the hero-cult, with strong pastoral overtones, into a cult of devotional religion occurred in this area as well, perhaps through the impact of the migration of pastoralists and of religious ideas. By the twelfth century Paṇḍharpur became the centre of the *bhakti* or devotional cult in which devotion was directed to Kṛṣṇa as the cult deity and he was said to have taken the form of Viṭṭhobā. This deity and the territory in which he was worshipped became crucial in the self-perception of the Marathas when they set up a state in the seventeenth century. The original hero of the hero-stone had undergone a transformation and was now in a world far removed from that of the heroes.

The world of the heroes was steeped in the notion of status by birth, this status being reinforced through the heroic act (*vīrya*) which brought the hero fame (*kīrti*, *yaśa*) (Kailasapathy 1968: 229ff). In a society given to competitiveness, the heroic act was also an act of individual self-assertion and the hero-stone captured the moment of self-assertion for eternity. For the hero's wife to become a *satī* would be in keeping with the values of the heroic cult where the woman was also required to demonstrate an almost aggressive self-assertion through a heroic act, thereby ensuring herself both fame and deification. Together with the stone the ballads and the epics were the means of conveying the renown to later generations. The hero-stone commemorated in form what the epic commemorated in words.

That this changed somewhat in later centuries is suggested by the function of the hero-stone and the *satī*-stone in the second millennium AD. The heroic act became an avenue to status and status in itself required the association with a heroic act. Those of high status were eulogised through hero-stones until finally the mere fact of belonging to a ruling family entitled one to a herostone, as symbolised for example in the *chhatris* of some Rajput royal families. In the same way the act of self-immolation was no longer a voluntary act of heroic dimensions but was on occasion the sordid detail of a royal funeral or, as some have suspected, the ritual removal of a legitimate heir to an inheritance.

The hero-stone in the earlier periods was the focus of gatherings of kinsmen and a form of ancestor worship, since it was generally the patrilineages which maintained the worship of the stone. This helped to strengthen lineage ties as well as the historical memory of the village and the locality. The rituals emphasised the aggregation of the hero to the community rather than his separation, despite his deification. The memorials provided a different type of continuity from the *śrāddha* ceremonies: it was a political and social continuity, relating to territory and descent groups. In the folk culture the hero-stone replaced the historical text and the tending of the hero-stone was almost synonymous with recording the past. The frequency of hero-stones is greater in areas where the oral tradition was the custodian of history. The incidental echoes of the *śrāddha* rituals would have served to foster communication between the royal and the rural, for the hero-stone represented a substratum cult. Those lacking a sufficiently high status perhaps used the hero as an ancestor and, latching on to his lineage, may well have used this to claim *kṣatriya* status. The hero entered the collective memory and became an ideal. The symbols associated with him raised him, as it were, above the context of family, time, and place.

The hero-stone cult had an extensive distribution in India; nevertheless, it manifests local styles and has distinct regional forms. Yet in substance it is similar and much of the symbolism seems to derive from the same sources. Did the cult originate in the widely diffused Yādava clans who, as cattle-herders and early agriculturalists in many regions, carried it with them in their extensive migrations and who continued with the cult even when some of their lineages rose to the status of dynasties (Thapar 1978: 240ff)? Or did it have its origins in a social context which venerated its heroes in a near-identical fashion in many parts of the subcontinent? The association with Kārttikeya and later the assimilation of the Kṛṣṇa Vāsudeva cult were common features over a wide geographical area. Admittedly both can easily be explained since the first is the deity of war, so essential to a hero cult, and the other, being the pastoral god *par excellence*, would be the natural deity in cattlekeeping areas. The elaboration of the cult in its second and later phase does suggest the rise in status of groups lower in the social scale as well as the mingling of local cults with those of what might be called the classical culture.

An impressionistic assessment of the geographical distribution of these memorials (in the absence of careful mapping) suggests that they tend to be concentrated in what have acted as 'frontier zones' at some stage—the peripheral areas of kingdoms and the intersection of ecological zones, particularly where pastoralism separated areas of intensive cultivation or lay close to forested areas. Frontier zones were often maintained as buffer regions where political security was transient and where royal armies did not necessarily guarantee protection to the local inhabitants. They would therefore inevitably have recourse to their own arrangements for protection, in which the village hero or the local chief played a major role. If the 'hero' happened to be a member of the local elite his family may well have emulated the life-style of the royal court and the hero would stake his claim to status by protecting the villagers. In the absence of royal troops this would give considerable credibility to the hero, particularly when the protection may have necessitated defending the village from the pillage of royal armies campaigning in the vicinity. This would suggest a differentiation of military functions in a decentralised political system. The core areas of powerful kingdoms would have had less use for what they would have regarded as upstart heroes. The hero cult therefore also acts as a marker separating those societies in which the significance of the clan and the heroic ideal remain strong from those in which such things are regarded as memories of the past. Peasant protest arising from an inability to pay revenue demands often took the form not of revolts but of migrations. Such peasant groups would tend to settle in the frontier zones in an effort to bring fresh land under cultivation and this would bring them into conflict with the existing population. Alternatively, protesting peasant groups if they failed to find fresh land would take to brigandage, and raiding a village was a relatively easy means of acquiring a minimum livelihood.

The period from the late first millennium AD was characterised by shifting political boundaries in which small states were frequently founded, survived for brief periods and then were either incorporated into a larger state or were readjusted in new alliances. This brought frontier zones into importance either in their earlier role as buffers or alternatively as areas to be settled and developed. The western Deccan around Paṇḍharpur was a clear example of such an area. The gradual conversion of the hero-stone into Viṭṭhobā and its links with the Kṛṣṇa cult not only demonstrates the process of the mutual assimilation of royal cults and rituals with those of lesser social status, but also marks the acculturation of the frontier zone. Not surprisingly such cults play a significant role in state formation.

But above all the hero-stone gave a different meaning to death. Death is in any case a change in status and the deification of the hero was a distinctive change. That it was not an ordinary death is reflected in the fact that although the death rites may have been restricted to the polluting space of the cremation ground, the event was commemorated in the precincts of the temple or in an area which acquired sanctity because of the presence of the hero-stone. The setting up of the hero-stone echoes the burial practices of earlier times and yet it does not mark the place of relics from the cremation. To this extent it differs from the tradition of building tumuli to the dead in which their relics were enshrined as in some of the *stūpas* and *caityas* adopted in Buddhist ritual.

The heroic act ensured the hero an abode in heaven. The promise of heaven, explicit in the early hero-stones, continued in the later phase as well. Not only did the hero not have to suffer the cycle of rebirth but his reward was immediate in his being taken to heaven. In the absence of an eschatology requiring a judgment day, this was a condition of eternal, timeless bliss. But the ultimate appeal transcended heaven and lay in the fact of deification. In a culture where the bestowal of divinity on animate and inanimate entities is common, deification was in itself perhaps not startling, but that it meant a different level of status for the hero was in effect the prize which made the heroic action worthwhile and placed a premium on a hero's death.

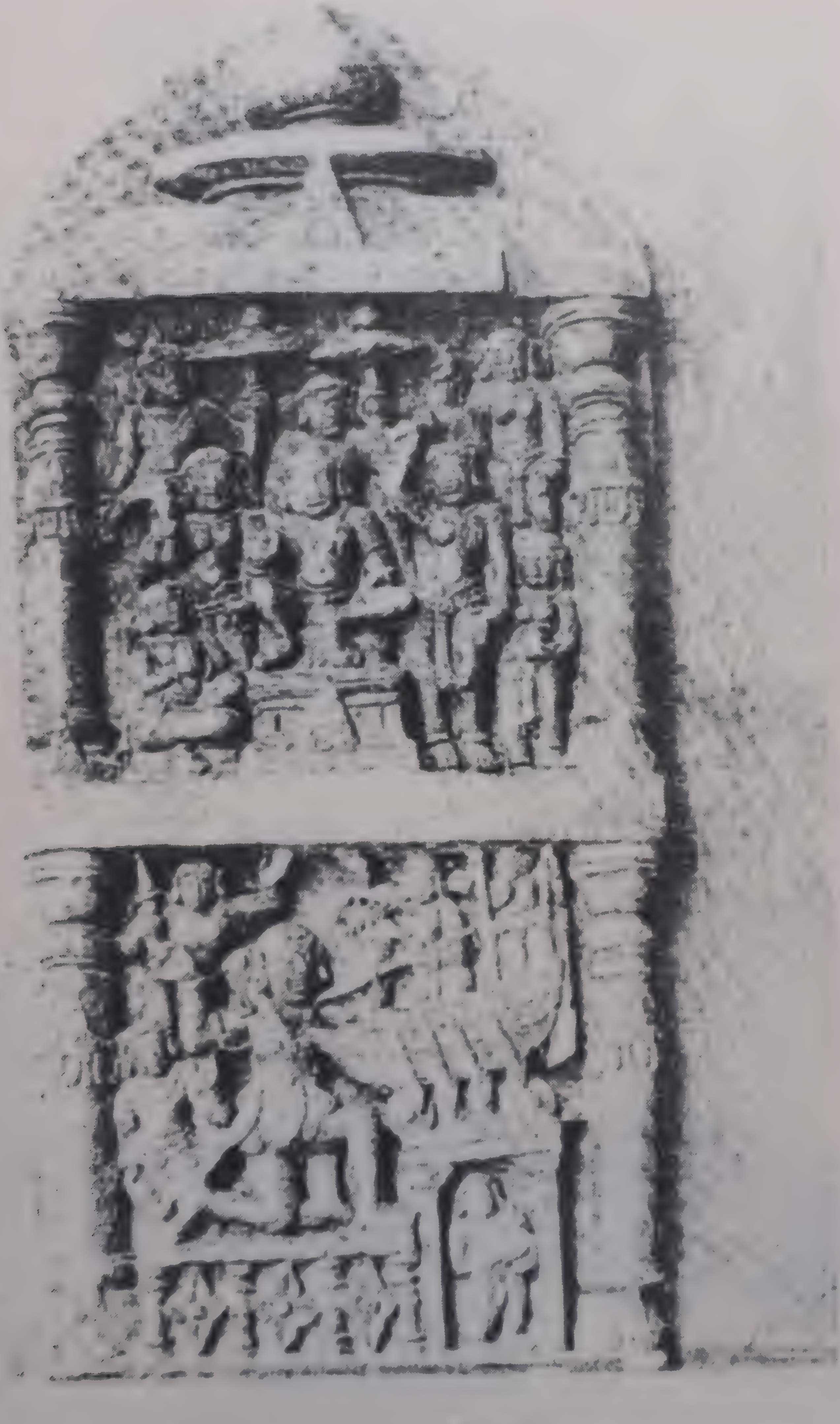

FIGURE 1 Hero-Stone from Molcamem, *c.* 12th Century

Courtesy: ASI Museum, old Goa

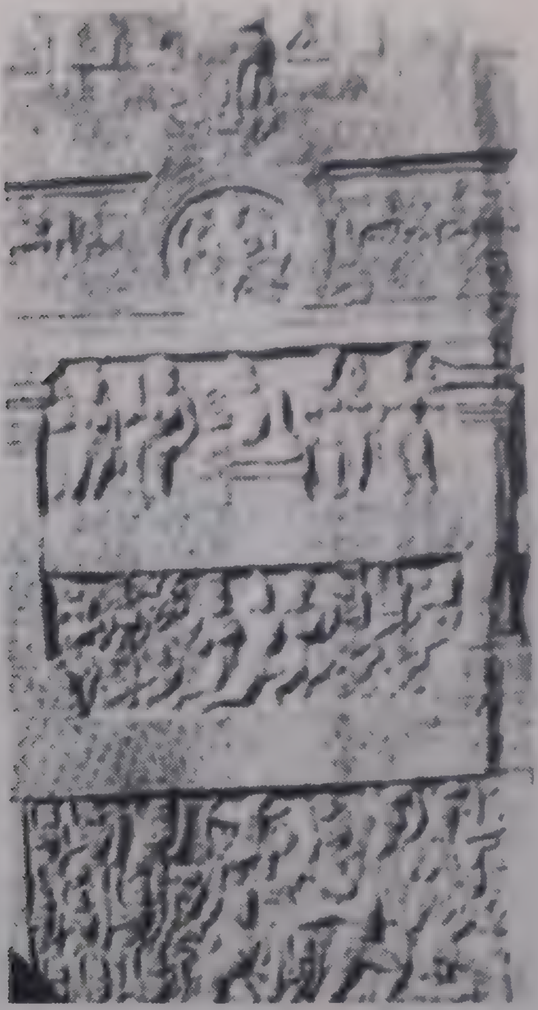

FIGURE 2 Hero-Stone from Gatag-Batgeri (Dharwar Distt)

Courtesy: Director IIAH, Karnataka University, Dharwar

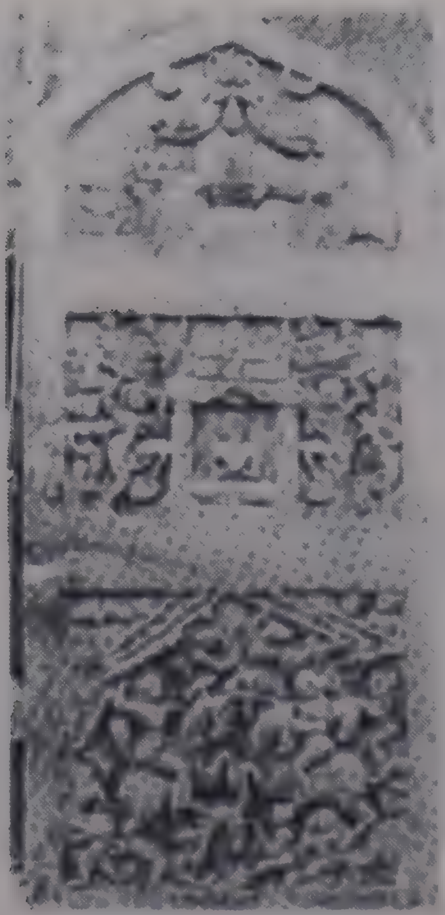

FIGURE 3 Hero-Stone from Holal (Bellary Distt), Karnataka

Courtesy: Director IIAH, Karnataka University, Dharwar

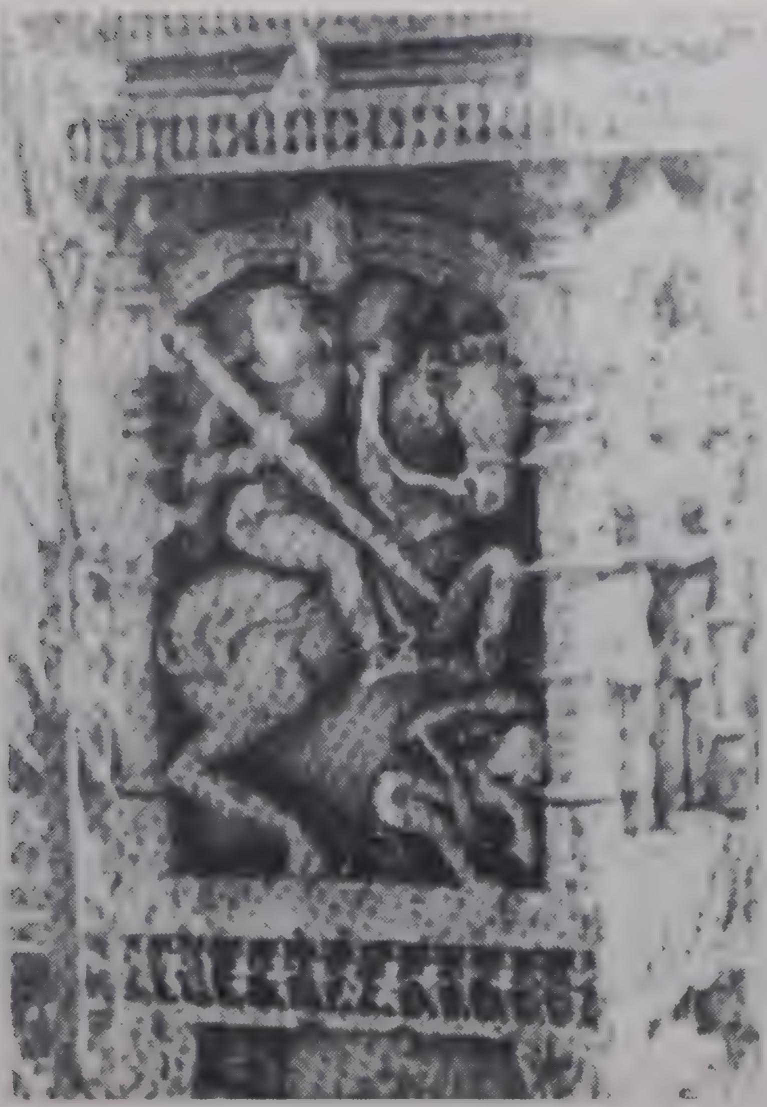

FIGURE 4 Hero-Stone from Damkhed (Gujarat), *c.* 12th Century

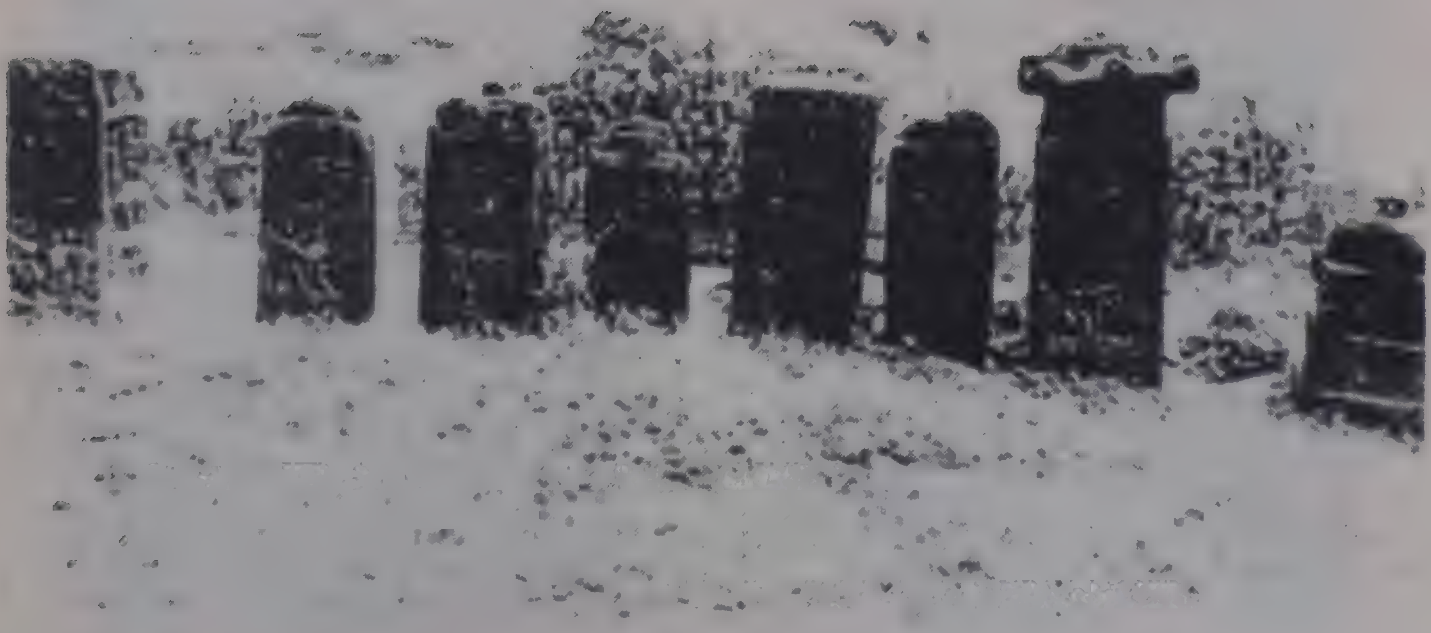

FIGURE 5 A Cluster of Hero-Stones at Bedsa (Maharashtra)

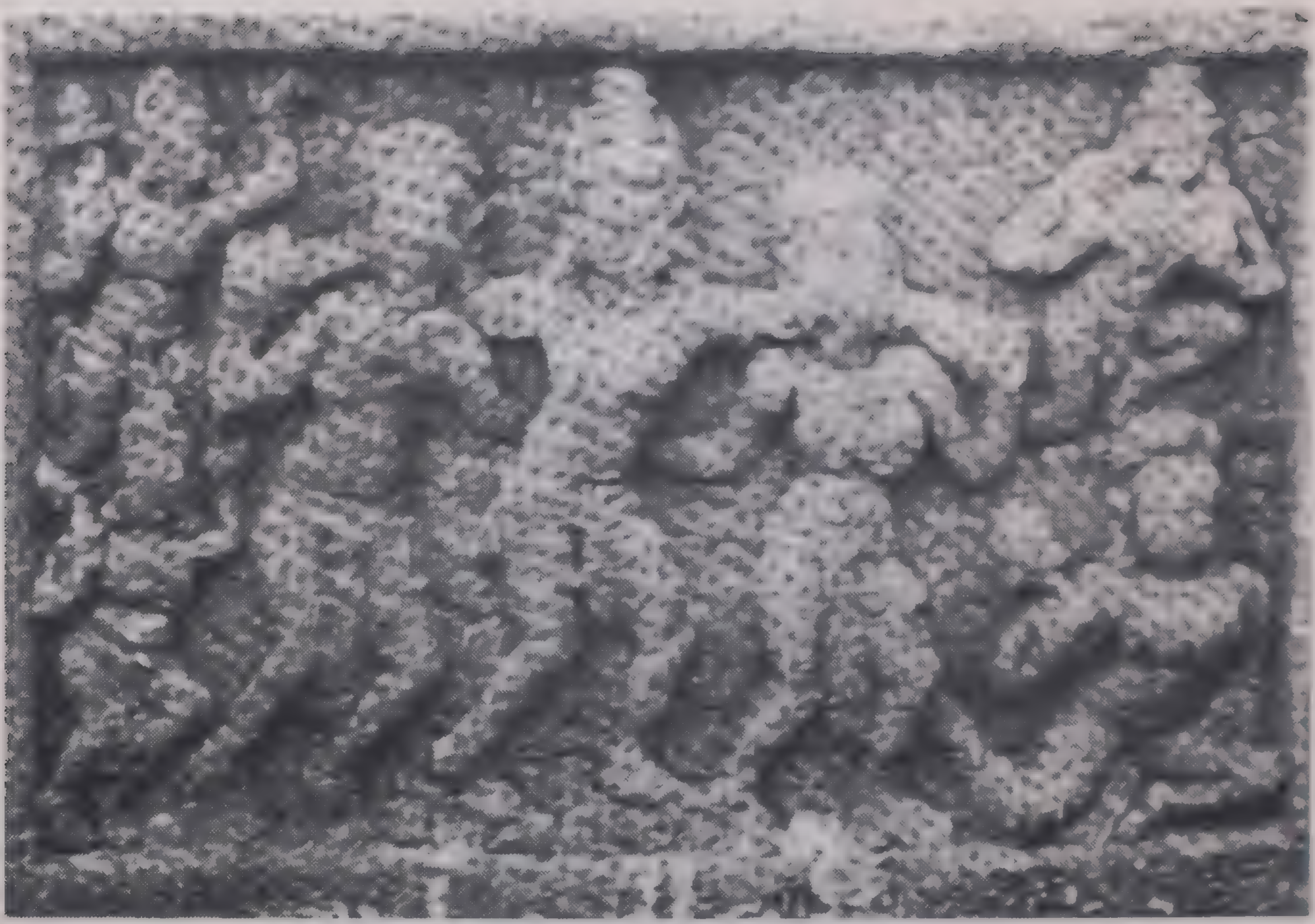

FIGURE 6 Hero Being Taken to Heaven by *Apsaras* from Kadabogere (Bellary Distt), Karnataka

Courtesy: Director IIAH, Karnataka University, Dharwar

FIGURE 7 Sati-stone from North Kerala

Notes and References

* Published in S.C. Humphreys and Helen King (eds), *Mortality and Immortality: The Anthropology and Archaeology of Death*, London 1981, 293–316 used with permission.

1. In the *tinai* concept, as evident from *Śaṅgam* literature, the hill region is associated with the Kuriñci flower which in turn was the symbol of Murugan. It is also connected with love in the Akam part of the literature and with cattle raiding in the Puram sections. There is therefore an interlinking of many ideas (K. Sivathamby, 1974).
2. Among the legends related of the cowherd god Kṛṣṇa Gopāla set in the region of Mathura (on the Yamuna south of Delhi) there is one which states that the power of Kṛṣṇa was challenged by the god Indra who poured down torrents of rain to flood the land and terrorise both men and cattle. Kṛṣṇa, undaunted, lifted the mountain Govardhana on his finger and the cattle took shelter beneath it and survived the wrath of Indra. The use of this imagery of cattle sheltering beneath a mountain is frequent in these hero-stones where it replaces the depiction of the hero protecting cattle and such stones are therefore called *Govardhana-kīrti-stambha*.
3. The memorial is dedicated to one who has died suddenly or violently and whose spirit is thought to haunt and possibly harass his living kinsmen. The ritual is performed by the *bhagat*, the priest of the local cult, who is not a *brāhmaṇa*. In a version of the ritual prevalent in Gujarat the memorial is cut from a log of teak wood taken after due libations to the tree in the forest and in the presence of family members accompanied by musicians. The assembly travels to the forest in a cart. The carving of the log takes a few days and although women are not permitted on the premises, others can watch the process and feed at the expense of the family whilst doing so. A small stone is taken from the property of the deceased and is said to represent the soul of the person who has died. This is buried either on the property of the deceased or along a road leading to his village. The memorial is placed on the ground above the stone, a ceremony which leads to much festivity. The ritual performed by the *bhagat* requires him to go into a trance and request the spirit of the deceased not to haunt and harass the living. A chicken is beheaded and its blood mixed with alcohol, some of which is sprinkled on the memorial and the remainder drunk by the *bhagat*. The feathers of the chicken are placed on the memorial and its flesh and the alcohol are given to those present. The memorial has a flat surface and is generally of wood. Since stone is expensive, stone memorials are a sign of status. The top is shaped and the symbols of the sun and the moon are shown, with scenes depicted beneath them in horizontal panels. There is usually a bird, generally a peacock or a parrot, a

man or a rider with an attendant, a cartful of musicians perhaps assisting in the ritual of cutting the log, and possibly some indication of the situation in which death has occurred, as for example the depiction of a snake or a crocodile. The memorial becomes the permanent resting place of the spirit of the deceased and is named after him. It is worshipped annually by the entire family (Fischer and Shah, 1973).

4. An interesting dichotomy is observed in some cases. In the village of Bedsa (near Poona in Maharashtra) a clear distinction is maintained between the hero-stone depicting a single hero crudely cut in stone worshipped by the Mahar untouchable community with goat sacrifices and alcohol being part of the ritual conducted by Mahar priests, and the elaborately sculpted square columns of the heroes of high status which stand in a row beside the Śiva temple and are worshipped with offerings of coconut and *sindura* (vermilion powder) by the *brāhmaṇas* of the village. The former is described as the guardian of the village by the Mahars and even if it was once a hero-stone it is now serving the function of a cult deity as well. The high status heroes are remembered more precisely as persons who repeatedly defended the village from invaders.
5. The term *pañca-vīra* is reminiscent of the Tamil term *aimperumvelir*, also meaning the five great heroes or chiefs and who are also said to be of the Yādava clan (Subrahmanian, 1966a: 110). The five heroes were worshipped as a group and by the early centuries AD images of the five are also referred to (The Mora Inscription, *Epigraphia Indica*, XXIV: 194; the Ghosundi Inscription, *Epigraphia Indica*, XXII: 204). For the persistence of the pattern of five heroes, see Thapar (1979).

Bibliography

Agrawala, R.C., 1963, 'Paścami Rājasthan ke kuch Prārambika Smṛiti Stambha', *Varadā*, April 1963, 68ff.

Ap.D.S. = *Āpastamba Dharma Sūtra*, *The Sacred Books of the East* (M. Müller, ed.), vol. 2, translated by G. Bühler (1879), Clarendon Press, Oxford.

Apte, V.M., 1954, *Social and Religious Life in the Grihya Sutras*, Popular Book Depot, Bombay.

Atharvaveda Saṃhitā, translated by W.D. Whitney, 1971, Motilal Banarsidass, Delhi.

Bhattacharya, S., 1970, *The Indian Theogony*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

Deleury, G.A., 1960, The *Cult of Viṭṭhobā*, Deccan College, Poona.

Epigraphia Indica, 1892, Burgess, J. and E. Hultzch (eds), Archaeological Survey of India, Departments of State and Public Institutions, Calcutta.

Fischer, E. and H. Shah, 1970, *Rural Craftsmen and Their Work*, National Institute of Design, Ahmedabad.

Fischer, E. and H. Shah, 1973, *Vetra ne Khambha: Memorials for the Dead*, Gujarat Vidyapeeth, Ahmedabad.

Fleet, J.F. (ed.), 1970, *Corpus Inscriptionum Indicarum*, vol. III, Indological Book House, Varanasi (reprint).

Kailasapathy, K., 1968, *Tamil Heroic Poetry*, Clarendon Press, Oxford.

Kane, P.V., 1941, *History of Dharmaśāstra*, vol. II, part 1, Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, Poona.

Mate, M.S. and S. Gokhale, 1971, 'Aihole: An Interpretation', in *Studies in Indian History and Culture* (S. Ritti and B.R. Gopal, eds), Karnataka University, Dharwar, pp. 501–4.

Ṛg Veda, translated by R.T.H. Griffith (1963, reprint), Chowkhamba Sanskrit Series, Varanasi.

Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa, The Sacred Books of the East (M. Müller, ed.), vol. 12, translated by J. Eggerling, 1882, Clarendon Press, Oxford.

Sivathamby, K., 1974, 'Early South Indian Society and Economy: the Tinai Concept', *Social Scientist*, 29 (vol. 3, no. 5), 20–37.

Sontheimer, G.D., 1976, 'Some Memorial Monuments of Western India', in *German Scholars on India* (Cultural Department of the Embassy of the Federal Republic of Germany, ed.), vol. II, pp. 264ff, Nachiketa Publications, Bombay.

Srinivasan, K., 1946, 'The Megalithic Burials and Urnfields of South India', *Ancient India*, 2, 9–16.

Subrahmanian, N., 1966a, *Pre-Pallavan Tamil Index*, University of Madras, Madras.

——— 1966b, *Śaṅgam Polity*, Asia Publishing House, Madras.

Thapar, R., 1978, 'Puranic Lineages and Archaeological Cultures', in Thapar, *Ancient Indian Social History: Some Interpretations*, pp. 240–67, Orient Longman, New Delhi.

——— 1979, 'The Historian and the Epic', *Annals of the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute*, 60, 199–213. See chapter 1 in this volume.

Tulpule, S.G., 1977–8, 'The Origin of Viṭṭhala: A New Interpretation', *Annals of the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute*, 58–9, 1009–15.

Vanamamalai, N., 1975, 'Hero-stone Worship in Ancient South India', *Social Scientist*, 34 (vol. 3, no. 10), 40–6.

Whitehead, H., 1921, *The Village Gods of South India* (2nd edn), Association Press and Oxford University Press, Calcutta.

6

*As Long as the Moon and the Sun Endure**

I would like in this brief paper to draw on two interests of Gunther Sontheimer. One is his important work on hero-stones.[1] I would also like to bring into the discussion a further aspect of the symbolism of the sun and the moon. The depiction of the sun and the moon is one almost invariable occurrence on hero-stones and *satī*-stones. This can perhaps be linked to Sontheimer's analysis of Hinduism as consisting of five components: the work and teaching of the *brāhmaṇas*, the sectarian movements based on renunciation and asceticism, the tribal, the folk religions where the icon is treated like a living person and the king/hero is identified with a deity, and *bhakti*.[2] The veneration for the hero-stone is rooted in tribal and folk religion but it also has some connections with the other components. The hero-stone is the memory of a living person encapsulated in a *mūrti*. The interface of these components seems to be reflected in the cult of the hero-stone, where the symbols set off associations.

The distribution of hero-stones has its own interest and needs perhaps to be plotted with reference to locations, numbers and chronology. This would involve a working out of typologies from the simple depictions of standing figures to those with complex panels in low relief, incorporating among other things, the narrative of the event. This may indicate co-relations between typologies and locations, concentrations in particular ecologies or in the frontier zones of states. Impressionistically, there appear to be fewer hero-stones in agriculturally fertile areas, but this would have to be corroborated. It may also provide evidence as to whether the hero-stones are social markers and relate to clan, status and/or particular occupations.

Are territorial claims and the defence of these associated with the dominant caste in a locality? Are hero-stones making a statement about status? Where religious sectarian identities are indicated, the plotting of these would also provide a different kind of evidence. And finally, do hero-stones refer to groups whose history is not written since they are not part of the royal court of kingdoms and where the oral traditions preserve memories of heroes. It is not my intention to attempt answers to these questions, but the small facet which I propose to discuss touches on many of these questions.

Prior to the setting up of the hero-stone, the hero perhaps represents the aspirations of the local community vis-à-vis the state. Since many of the memorials commemorate cattle-raids one needs to ask, who is raiding cattle? Are there predators—human and animal—or are some of these cattle raids organised by the state wishing to bring pastoralist groups to heel?[3] Predators can be forest peoples, the *āṭavikas*, trying to prevent the encroachment of graziers into the forest lands, or they can be impoverished peasants. They are unlikely to have been hostile pastoralists unless the purpose of the raid was to increase the herd.[4] The hero-stone where it gives expression to the power of the hero could well be a reflection of the stand taken by the local community towards the state, where either the state is the aggressor or as more probable, the state is seen as incapable of defending the local community.

In the setting up of a hero-stone the memorial gives a distinctive status to the hero. Does the memorial restore the power of the hero which had been snatched away in death or does it also restore power to the community of the hero? The appeasing of the spirit of the hero is in part a restoration of power.[5] The stone is also seen as the embodiment of the body of the hero.[6] As one who has been venerated almost to the point of being divinised, the hero could become the mediator between humans and gods, for the memorial not only represents the deity but also evokes the deity. The worship of the stone is therefore the worship of the hero but at a further remove, also the worship of the deity of the hero. The sequence can become merged as in the case of the worship of Biroba as a hero at Vasi near Kolhapur and in Karnataka.[7]

Where the hero is deified, this is related to the manner of his death. It can be either a voluntary death, an act of extreme devotion, frequent among women who become *satīs* and less so among men, or it can be the requirement of a contract with or a vow to the deity. More commonly however, the death so commemorated results from defence against a raid or in a battle. The hero-stone therefore encapsulates funeral rites. The dead hero is in a sense returned to the community and to his ancestors. If it is treated also as a cult of the ancestors there is a re-ordering of social relationships. The ancestors require the maintenance of a genealogy. Possibly there may also be an emphasis on the need to keep the rites of the *śrāddha*. There is in other kinds of death a dichotomy between body and soul since the soul of the hero goes out of the world of the living and enters another world. But the hero's death seems not to endorse this dichotomy, for he is taken to heaven as himself and not a disembodied soul. In heaven life is timeless. There is no eschatology after the hero has entered heaven and the latter is known by various nomenclatures: Brahmaloka, Sūryaloka, Indraloka, Kailāśa, and so on.

Since it is the heroic death which permits of a distinctive eschatology and on occasion the divinisation of the hero, it is compared to other activities which have a religious bearing and are said to be conducive to the attainment of heaven or of release from rebirth, such as the sacrificial ritual and asceticism. The metaphors which link battle, sacrifice and asceticism are found in various texts, either originally of the brahmanical tradition or appropriated by this tradition. The *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* describes the *agnihotra* sacrifice as the heaven-bound boat and compares the two altars to the sides of the boat and the priest who pours the milk to the steersman.[8] The Śānti-parvan of the *Mahābhārata* refers to the best of kings/heroes as the one who protects cows and *brāhmaṇas* (and by implication is willing to die in thus protecting), for he will go to the heaven of Indra.[9] The best of heroes, Arjuna, has Indra for his father and is welcomed in Indra's heaven, the abode of heroes.[10]

In pastoral societies, cattle raids can be one method of increasing a depleted herd. The *dāna-stuti* hymns of the *Ṛgveda*, are eulogies to the successful raider who brings back wealth and wealth is frequently computed in head of cattle.[11] In the *Mahābhārata*, the hero is still a successful raider, but is more often the one who dies heroically in battle. The living hero is eulogised, but so also the one who died in battle. The nobility of heroic death is enhanced when battle comes to be compared with the *yajña*, the sacrificial ritual. The *Mahābhārata* states that the *kṣatriya* should die not at home but on the battlefield.[12] The details of the comparison between the battle and the *yajña* are graphic.[13] The elephants constitute the *ṛtvij*, the horses are the *adhvaryu*, the flesh and blood of the enemy are the libations, the jackals and vultures who consume these libations are the *sadasiyas*, the weapons are the ladles and sticks, the battle-cries are the *sāmans*, the avant-garde in battle array is the *śyenaciti*, the kettle-drums are the *vaṣat* and so on. The continuity of this simile can be seen even as late as the tenth century AD in an inscription of Dhaṅga at the Lakṣmaṣa temple at Khajurāho.[14] Here, in a somewhat gentler rendering of the idea it is said that the king is never tired when performing the sacrificial ritual in the form of a battle, where the sword is the ladle, blood is the butter libation, the twanging of the bow-string is the *vaṣat*, the priests are the warriors and the enemies are the sacrificial victims. The hero-stone in a sense negates the idea of the dead being polluting and more so when the act of dying in battle is equated with the performing of a sacrificial ritual, where the patron of the ritual is in a state of purity.

The comparison with asceticism is less dramatic and gory. The austerities and practices of the ascetics are compared to the painful death of the hero in battle or in the severing of his head as part of a voluntary death. Both are seen as superhuman feats.[15] Death is an entry into a different life as also is the act of renunciation. The symbolic death of the ascetic, when the rites of passage of the dead are carried out for him who forsakes his family to become an ascetic, leads him however to a different life from that of the hero in heaven. For instance, the ascetic denies himself sexuality, whereas the hero in heaven presumably lives a life of enhanced sexuality with the *apsarās*. A late text states that two categories of men pierce the orb of the sun, that is attain heaven, the ascetic and the hero who dies fighting the enemy, and the latter is waited upon by damsels in heaven.[16] The reward is of course not temporary but for eternity.

On the hero-stones, eternity is symbolised by depicting the full orb of the sun and the crescent moon, usually at the top of the stone. This would seem to reflect a complex inter-twining of sun and moon symbolism with ancestors, gods and the after-life. At one level the representation of the sun and the moon is for obvious reasons. They are the two dominant planets which govern natural laws and above all, which govern time and are perceived as indestructible. An evocative description of time calls it the *sūtradhāra* of the universe.[17] The sun and the moon are fundamental to time calculations in the various details of the solar and lunar calendar as also in the two systems where the Lunar calendar also draws on planetary positions and the solar calendar refers to other features. This is one area in which the interplay of Indian and Hellenistic astronomy is evident.

So common was its usage for indestructible time, that a phrase incorporating this idea—as long as the moon and the sun endure—occurs repeatedly in inscriptions. Aśoka speaks of his propagation of *dhamma*, so that among his sons and great-grandsons, and as long as the moon and sun endure, people may follow the *dhamma*.[18] As a formula it is frequently found towards the end of inscriptions reading, *a-candrāditya-kāliya* or *candrārka-kṣiti-samakālam*.[19] These were generally inscriptions recording grants and were expected to be irrevocable. Sometimes there is a trace of irony perhaps in this reference, since the royal patron making such a grant might also claim to belong to one of the two major royal lineages, the Sūryavaṃśa and the Candravaṃśa. After the two lineages had been plotted in the early *Purāṇas* and further established through the *Rāmāyaṇa* being the text associated with the Sūryavaṃśa and the *Mahābhārata* largely concerned with the Candravaṃśa, it became customary for dynasties to seek links with one of the two.[20]

A text as late as the *Mahānirvāṇa Tantra* also introduces this idea.[21] In yogic practice, the two main nerve centres of the human body, the *nāda* and *bindu* were described as the sun and the moon and their union was sought. Tantric cults give prominence to this symbolism in the *maṇḍalas* of the sun and the moon. The *sādhaka* or the practitioner is referred to as the *vīra*, the hero. The rituals performed by the *vīra* had some items in common with the rituals associated with the hero-stone, such as the sacrificing of a male animal and the use of intoxicants for libations. Alchemical texts also speak of the union of Hara and Gauri—mercury and mica/the moon and the sun—through the two basic processes of sublimation and transmutation, and this union becomes crucial to *rasāyaṇa-vidya* or alchemy.[22]

At the level of folk religion, the area of Sontheimer's interest also reflects the induction of this symbolism into belief. At the Dhangar festival of *somavatī amāvasya*, Khaṇḍoba is taken in his *pālki* from the temple upto the Karha river where he is said to bathe. This is interpreted today as Khaṇḍoba representing the sun and the river representing the moon.[23] The association of power with the symbols has its own relevance for their use on hero-stones and *satī*-stones. Such examples abound in folk religion.

The presence of these planetary symbols is also evident in the texts of the *brāhmaṇas* and is not unrelated to ideas about the after-life. I would like to trace this primarily through the *Ṛgveda* and the *Upaniṣads*. In a late section of the *Rgveda* it is said that the dead travel from this world to the beyond by two paths: the *devapatha* and the *pitṛpatha*.[24] The *pitṛpatha* is open to those who do *tapasya*, to heroes who offer their lives in battle or make large gifts/*dāna*, who follow the *ṛta*/the natural law and to *kavīs*/poets skilled in various arts.[25] In the *devapatha*, Agni is the intermediary between men and gods and bears offerings to the gods.[26] However the distinction between the two is not very marked, particularly as there is much detail on the various grades of *pitṛs*[27] and death is sometimes said to have another path from that of the *devayāna*.[28] The *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* states that the path on which the offerings are taken to the gods, becomes the path on which the *yajamāna* (the patron of the sacrifice) himself travels to the *devaloka* and that everything that lives here passes onto either of the two ways of the *devas* and the *pitṛs*.[29] The *Mahābhārata* links the two with the two planets when it states that there are two paths, the *devayāna* and the *pitṛyāna* and that the Sun is the gate of the first and the Moon, the gate of the second.[30] This link is developed at length in the *Upaniṣads* where there are elaborations on the earlier ideas as also the introduction of a contrast which derives largely from the way the two planets are perceived. Those living in the forest, meditating on the truth with faith, pass into the light.[31] Meditating in the forest, implying some degree of renunciation, is very different from the hero of the *Ṛgveda* who has to fight, offer sacrifices and make generous gifts. The description of the *devayāna* is that from the light, the soul passes to the day, the *śuklapakṣa* or bright fortnight, the *uttarāyana* or summer solstice to the *devaloka* from where it goes to the sun and eventually the world of Brahmā. From here there is no return, no rebirth. A different path is charted for those who conquer the worlds through *yajña*, *dāna* and *tapasya*. They take the *pitṛyāna*, where the soul passes through smoke into the night, the *kṛṣṇapakṣa* or dark fortnight, the *dakṣināyana* or winter solstice to the *pitṛloka* and on to the moon. Here it becomes food for the gods and then passes into space, air, rain, earth, to become the food of humans and to be born of women. This envisages a cycle of rebirth. The notion of *pitṛyāna* introduces the cult of ancestors, albeit indirectly. The ancestors are differentiated from the gods for they are not immortal; they can and do return to be appeased and theirs is a genealogical identity. The moon and the sun in these descriptions are binary opposites as they were to become in much of the later symbolism. Central to this dichotomy is the question of the knowledge of the self through meditation—*vidyātmanam*—which leads to the *devayāna*.[32] This is to be distinguished from *yajña* which does not lead to immortality because the soul that takes the *pitṛyāna* is reborn. It is not entirely fortuitous therefore that the metaphors of asceticism, sacrifice and battle are sought to be linked in the texts. The hero-stone however does not require the hero to be a patron of the sacrifice: it suffices that he dies in battle.

If an association is postulated between the textual sources and the hero-stones it raises at least two queries for the historian. One relates to the chronological horizon and the other to the agency responsible for the making of an incorporative statement. Chronologically, some texts which carry notions relevant to explaining the meaning of the symbols, are much earlier than the hero-stones but their association with the memorials, if at all, would be of a later date. The linking of the two would have required an agency. Other texts, such as the Tantric, coincide with the time when hero-stones are frequent. The multi-voiced statements of the symbols of the moon and the sun may be seen as an attempt to provide an encompassing tradition or alternatively as reflecting a parallel tradition. If the hero-stone cult was a substratum cult and the symbolic meaning of the sun and the moon was known generally, then the depiction of these planets would be drawing on widely recognised symbols.

The agencies can be multiple. Perhaps the most obvious would be the negotiation between high culture and local cults with a corresponding merging of ideas and practices, what in literary discussion is referred to as *mārga* and *deśi*. This dichotomy would also touch on Sontheimer's use of the contrasting *kṣetra* and *vana*.[33] This separation would also have been encouraged in the diffusion of brahmanism backed by royal patronage and supported through grants of land to *brāhmaṇas*. Such grants generally represent the state and the brahmanical perspective, but to see the outcome of the negotiation it becomes necessary to analyse the religious cults and sects of the time as manifestations of the actual negotiation. This can sometimes be seen in the inter-changeability of local deities and their attributes and forms, as for example in the worship of goddesses or of male deities which are otherwise not central to the pantheon, such as Aiyanar or the various *kṣetrapālas*. Other agencies include the cult of ancestors, the popularity of Tantric practices and sects, the wandering ascetics such as the *Nāthapanthis* and Gosains, as also the migration circuits of pastoralists or blacksmiths who also act as a conduit for beliefs and rituals.

Where locations of hero-stones are relatively close to the land granted to *brāhmaṇas*, as some might possibly have been, there may have been an enriching of the bare and simple symbolism of the hero-stone. The change to depicting more complex ideas on the stone appears to be an indication of this. Were the myths of the cattle-raids in the *Ṛgveda* now reiterated in Brahmanical circles who were witnessing or hearing about actual cattle raids? Was the society of the hero now becoming familiar with these myths and even indirectly deriving some legitimacy from them? The hero-stones which survive in the largest numbers date to the period after about the ninth century AD. Was there now a growing appropriation of the heroic consciousness from the tradition of the *Mahābhārata*, which in some areas was newly taking root, even if in a local form. Both the textual and oral tradition relating to folk literature indicate this. To this may have been added some distant notion of themes from texts such as the *Upaniṣads*.

Where there might have been proximity between hero-stones and *brāhmaṇa* grantees, there also might have been both assimilation and tension between them. The upwardly mobile family of the hero and the newly settled *brāhmaṇa* grantee may well have had to make major adjustments. In some cases the family of the hero is given a grant which enables it to enter the ranks of the landowning strata or perhaps even claim *kṣatriya* status. If the *brāhmaṇa's* freedom from rebirth lay in knowledge and that of the hero in death on the battlefield or in a skirmish, the two activities would have been sufficiently distanced. The competition for status would however relate to the manner in which they were viewed by the local community, to whom both had to address themselves. The erecting of hero-stones in temple courtyards is a signal of concessions made by the Brahmanic, Purānic system to local tradition and such an amalgamation suggests that the dichotomy became less sharp over time. Since the hero-stone did not contain the bodily relics of the dead person it was not polluting and could be erected in the sacred space of the temple. The placement within the precincts of temples maintained by *brāhmaṇas*, although enhancing the prestige of the hero-stone, would at the same time, have required the discontinuing or modifying of those aspects of the rituals connected with the hero-stone which were unacceptable to Brahmanical practice. Worship would take the form of *pūjā* and in some cases offerings of blood and alcohol would be replaced by coconuts, flowers, and such like. Consciousness of the Brahmanic tradition led to some incorporation of Brahmanic ritual in societies otherwise distanced from *brāhmaṇas*. Legitimation is constantly sought, both by those wanting Brahmanic rituals and by *brāhmaṇas* reiterating their superior status.

The historical context for such activities is more evident in the post-Gupta period when new states were constantly being created and the process required the appropriation of resources, often through the subjugation of forest peoples and their conversion to caste society and inevitably therefore the incorporation of local religious beliefs and practices into the evolving religious norms. Large numbers of hero-stones seem to coincide with these changes. This is not surprising as it was a time of shifting boundaries which made frontier zones vulnerable. The heroes were also part of the ambience of adventurers attempting to establish small kingdoms.

This is not to suggest that the hero-stone reflects a Sanskritic tradition, but rather, that even a simple symbol on a hero-stone may have touched on more widely ramified cults and associations. The hero-stone and its stance on death and on life after death, does not follow the *pitṛyāna* or the *devayāna*, but refers to a different eschatology. The heaven of the hero is not the abode connected with either the moon or the sun, but that of the deity to which he is taken by the *apsarās* and where he lives to eternity. Nor does the soul have to travel over time, for the heroes reward is immediate. The hero-stone established a distinctly different tradition but one which is suggestive of having some echoes of the others.

Among these could be that if the union of the sun and the moon leads to *mokṣa*/liberation, as in some Tantric traditions then the depiction of the two planets on either side of the hero may also be intended to suggest such a liberation. Where the eschatology is substantially different as in the concept of *nirvāṇa* in Buddhism, presumably the hero attains *nirvāṇa*. This would seem to be so from the unusual tenth century hero-stone from Vilpatta, showing the hero on one face of the stone and on the other a seated Buddha with one hand in the *bhūmisparṣa mudra*.[34] Here there are no *apsarās* taking the hero to heaven.

The implications of the symbolism of the moon and the sun on hero-stones would also include the *satī*-stones. In these the memorial is to an act of devotion, but it is nevertheless a heroic act which, being deliberate and in theory voluntary, is more so in fact than dying on the field of battle. It is the nature of dying which bestows divinity on the woman and makes of her a *satī*.

It is therefore difficult to categorise hero-stones as belonging to either the folk or the high culture. Within the typology of forms there are degrees of difference often expressed in the narration of the episode and recognisable religious identity. The episode becomes an avenue to upward mobility but where the Brahmanical model need not apply. The invention of the hero-stone, initially a commemorative memorial, can become the document to claims to higher social status. In the process some elements of high culture are borrowed and some elements of folk culture are elevated and made visible. The audience addressed by these forms recognises the symbols as traversing multiple cultures. This involves the historian in recognising 'codes' which derive not just from textual and ritual sources but also from the wider symbols of variant and relevant cultures. The hero-stone also creates its own community and the study of the memorial needs to investigate what has been so far the invisible community of the hero-stone.

Notes and References

* Published in *Cultural Pasts: Essays in Early Indian History*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2000.

1. G.D. Sontheimer, 'Some Memorial Monuments of Western India', in *German Scholars on India*, II, Bombay, 1976, pp. 264ff. G.D. Sontheimer and S. Setter (eds), *Memorial Stones*, Dharwar, 1982.
2. 'The Five Components and Their Interaction', in G.D. Sontheimer and H. Kulke (eds), *Hinduism Reconsidered*, Delhi, 1989, pp. 197–212.
3. Kil Muttugur insc. *EI*.4.178, 182–3; Naregal insc. *EI*.6.162; Bangavadi insc. *EI*.7.22.
4. The obtaining of meat would have been an unlikely reason. Cattle herders rarely consume beef indiscriminately as this would damage the livestock. Meat is eaten only on specific occasions. The predators are likely to have been other organised groups.
5. E. Fischer and H. Shah, *Vetra ne Khambha: Memorials for the Dead*, Ahmedabad, 1973.
6. N. Vanamamalai, 'Hero-stone Worship in Ancient South India', *Social Scientist*, 1975, 34 (3, 10), pp. 40–6.
7. G.D. Sontheimer, *Pastoral Deities in Western India*, Delhi, 1993, 197, 203.
8. *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*, 2.3.3.15.
9. 21.18–19; 78.28–31.
10. *Mahābhārata*, Vanaparvan, 43ff.

11. R. Thapar, 'Dāna and Dakṣinā as Forms of Exchange', in *Ancient Indian Social History: Some Interpretations*, New Delhi, 1978, 105–21. See chapter 3 in this volume.
12. Śānti-parvan, 98.22–4.
13. Śānti-parvan, 99.12ff.
14. *Epigraphia Indica*, I, 126.17.
15. G.D. Sontheimer in *German Scholars on India*, II, p. 268.
16. Parāśara, 3.37–8.
17. Bhartṛhari in *Vākyapadīya*, 3.9.3–5. The *sūtradhāra* is literally the one who holds the string, namely, the manager.
18. Pillar Edict, VII. J. Bloch, *Les Inscriptions d'Asoka*, Paris, 1950, 172.
19. D.C. Sircar, *Indian Epigraphical Glossary*, Delhi, 1966, p. 388.
20. R. Thapar, 'Genealogical Patterns as Perceptions of the Past', *Studies in History*, ns, 1991, 7, 1, 1–36. See chapter 7 in this volume.
21. 14.66; 14.89–90.
22. D.P. Chattopadhyaya, *Lokayata*, New Delhi, 1968, pp. 468ff.
23. J.M. Stanley, 'Special Time, Special Power: the Fluidity of Power in a Popular Hindu Festival', *Journal of Asian Studies*, 1977, 37, 27–43.
24. 10.88.15; 10.98.11; 10.14.1–10; 10.154; also in 1.162.21; 3.54.5; 7.76.2.
25. *Ṛgveda*, 10.154.
26. *Ṛgveda*, 1.72.7; 2.2.4.
27. *Ṛgveda*, 10.14.7–8; 10.16.1; 10.15.1.
28. *Ṛgveda*, 10.18.1.
29. 1.9.3.2; 12.8.1.21.
30. 12.17.14; 13.16.45.
31. *Bṛhadāranyaka Upaniṣad*, 6.2.15ff. *Chāndogya Upaniṣad*, 5.10.1–2.
32. *Praṣna Upaniṣad*, 1.10.
33. 'The *vana* and the *kṣetra*' in G.C. Tripathi and H. Kulke (eds), *Religion and Society in Eastern India*, Bhubaneshwar, 1986, 117–64.
34. Shown in the Anuradhapura Museum.

7

*Genealogical Patterns as Perceptions of the Past**

I

Genealogies have had little respectability among recent historians. It was only with the work of anthropologists and some social historians that what was regarded as fanciful concoction is now being treated more seriously.[1] Genealogies claim to be records of succession in the past although their preservation or even invention can derive from the social institutions of the present for which they provide legitimizing mechanisms. They are rarely, if ever, faithful records of the past reality but they can be memories of social relations. As such they are not records of individuals but of groups and generally those ranked high. Succession therefore also relates to transfer of property and status. They change over time and are rearranged if need be, the rearrangement being in accordance with the requirements of later times. They may or may not record actual migration, fission or assimilation but where they do so, they incorporate such changes in a genealogical pattern. Myth and history in such perceptions of the past, merges, as does the present into the past.[2]

At another level genealogies are a commemoration of those who have passed away and, in some senses they are almost a cult of the dead. They record supposed ancestors, for, the connections do not necessarily have to be biological and are required in order that status be bestowed on those making the claims. Frequently the earlier portions of lengthy genealogies are fabricated. Therefore, the nature of connections sought by those constructing the genealogy are significant.

Genealogies become important at points of historical change, either with the entry of new social groups or factions, or in periods of competition when existing authority feels threatened. Genealogies are legal charters and the rearrangement of fragments of genealogies or the compilation of such fragments into a coherent whole are closely tied to the changing political status of the subject of the genealogies as well as of the authors. The historical reasons for the compiling of genealogies is therefore as significant as the actual pattern of the compilation.[3] Genealogical lists are arranged in a chronological perspective and involve elements of time reckoning. Genealogies therefore do not necessarily reflect the actuality of the past, but claim to represent it and are therefore a perspective of the past. It is in this sense that the genealogical section of the *Purāṇas* are being examined here.

II

At a particular time genealogy comes to be seen as the central component of the past. Among the earlier texts, the *Mahābhārata* opens with the genealogies of the main families and genealogies are also introduced into the first book of the *Rāmāyaṇa*. It gradually became important that the genealogical data be constructed into a pattern and this pattern seems to have taken the shape of the *vaṃśānucarita* section of the early *Purāṇas*. Because the *Purāṇas* were put together at a particular time, this section developed a distinctive pattern and was not just an arbitrary perspective. Since the genealogies of the Vedic texts and the epics and *Purāṇas* do not always tally, they have been dismissed as fabricated. But what is important is to attempt an explanation of the meaning of the final form in which these genealogies were recorded in the *Purāṇas*.

By about the fourth century AD there came to be compiled the earliest of a category of texts called the *Purāṇas*. These drew on materials believed to relate to the past and took the form of cosmology, legends and genealogies. They mark a perspective which is not arbitrary because of their distinctive contents and the fact that they were put together at a particular time. Whether Purāṇic genealogies should be taken seriously as historical material has been controversial. Some have stated that, '... to extract either chronology or history from such data, must be an operation attended with equal success as the extraction of sunbeams from cucumbers by the sages of Laputa.'[4] Vincent Smith on the other hand spoke of their dynastic lists as a 'near approach to accuracy', particularly in relation to the Andhra kings, although other historians have been more sceptical.[5] The great defender of the *Purāṇas* was F.E. Pargiter who argued that even as part of the oral tradition some memory of early kings would have remained and that however garbled the genealogies may be, they would still have been based initially on some authentic versions. This provided the *Purāṇas* with some respectability but the debate remained heated.[6] More recently, R. Morton Smith has attempted to streamline the lists into a chronology of kings but not very convincingly.[7]

That there was a tradition of maintaining genealogies in India in early times, is attested to by Megasthenes, who, writing in the fourth century BC states that upto the time of Sandracottos (Candragupta) the Indians counted 153 kings over 6042 years.[8] Pliny has the figure at 154 kings over a period of 6451 years.[9] The debate among modern historians has hinged on a literal understanding of history as a chronicle of rulers and therefore questioning the genealogies as factual statements, whereas it might be more useful to understand why genealogies, factual or not, came to play such a central role in the perception of the past.

An attempt will be made here to analyse the genealogical chapter of the early *Purāṇas*. This consists of three sections with distinctly different patterns. The first deals with origins and is ensconced in cosmological time. The second constructs a record of what was perceived as the lineages of ruling clans. These include the families and clans which are the subject of the two epics, the *Mahābhārata* and the *Rāmāyaṇa* and appear to reflect clan or lineage-based society prior to, or in transition to, the formation of states. The third section is a listing of kings and dynasties, recording the establishment of the monarchical state. It focuses initially on Magadha in south Bihar and continues upto the Guptas, known from other sources to be reigning from the fourth century AD.[10] These three distinctive patterns would, it seems, also reflect a perception of historical change in northern India.

The format of the *Purāṇa* ideally covered the *pañca-lakṣana* or the five facets, of *sarga* or primary creation, *prati-sarga* or secondary creation, *manvantara* which were the major time cycles, *vaṃśa* or succession which is largely material on deities and sages, and the section which concerns us, the *vaṃśānucarita* or the succession of ruling families. The latter therefore is regarded as an important component of the ideal *Purāṇa* and is set in a context which draws on the past.[11] Needless to say only one *Purāṇa* conforms strictly to this format. Sometimes there is even mention of ten facets and these are even less evident in the texts.[12] Each *Purāṇa* relates to a deity and incorporates the information required by those who worship that deity. The inclusion of rules relating to gift-giving, fasts, pilgrimages, rituals and such like were probably later additions, when the character of the Purāṇic data became more clearly sectarian and religious. The oldest of the *Purāṇas* are the *Matsya*, *Vāyu* and the *Brahmāṇḍa* and for our purposes, the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa*, somewhat later than the first three, is important as incorporating genealogical data.[13]

As a category of texts, the *Purāṇas* also came to include a wide variety of what might be called sub-texts, such as the *Upa-Purāṇas*, texts on sacred topography and places of pilgrimage such as the *Sthala-Purāṇas* and the *Māhātmyas*, the Buddhist and Jaina *Purāṇas* and later the caste-*purāṇas* as for example those of the Mallas, the Śrimālas, and the Dharmāranyas. In each case the attempt is to provide the present with sanctity by drawing upon the past. The earlier *Purāṇas* were composed in Sanskrit and those of a much later period were also written in the regional languages. The tradition therefore did not cease and the texts covered a variety of topics relating to sects, cults, temples, places of pilgrimage and observances in the case of those associated with what has come to be called the Hindu tradition. However our concern is only with the genealogies in the early *Purāṇas* even if embedded in ritual literature. Incidentally, the word *vaṃśa*, literally meaning bamboo or cane, where the joints of the stem are suggestive of generational growth, referred to any list of succession, whether of teachers, sages, ruling clans, descent groups or dynasties.

In claiming antiquity it is stated that the god Brahmā compiled the *Purāṇas* even before the *Vedas* were revealed.[14] This incidentally also emphasises a different origin for the two categories of texts and the difference is further underlined in the fact that each *Purāṇa* becomes a sectarian text focusing on a particular deity. The Vedic link also goes back to the earlier statement that the *itihāsa-purāṇa* was the fifth *Veda*. We are further told that Veda Vyāsa, having edited the earlier Vedic material and authored the *Mahābhārata*, subsequently gathered together the *itihāsa-purāṇa* and compiled the original *Purāṇa*.[15] This story was an attempt to give a higher status to the *Purāṇas*, and the *Vedas* are brought in to sanctify the compilation of the *Purāṇas*. The possibility of such an *ur*-text has not been accepted by most scholars who hold that there has always been a diversity of Purāṇic texts. Furthermore, before the compilation of the *Purāṇas* as texts, they were probably in the form of oral transmissions and therefore more fragmented.

There is a close parallel in some forms incorporated in the *Purāṇas* and the epics. The *Mahābhārata* also begins with the arrival of the *sūta* or bard in the forest and he is asked to recite the story—*purāṇam*—a story which eventually became the epic. The contents of the *Purāṇas* drew on the hero-lauds and the eulogies of the Vedic texts as well as on the shorter narratives about earlier *rājās* which were incorporated into the *Purāṇas*, although often after some change.[16] There is a controversy among recent scholars as to whether they are intended as commentaries on Vedic texts or as a separate category of literature but drawing on some narratives from the Vedic texts.[17]

The *Mahābhārata* narrates the story of Manu Vaivasvata, referred to as the *matsyakam nāma purāṇam*.[18] There are references in the *Purāṇas* to the use of earlier forms familiar from the Vedic corpus, such as the *ākhyāna*, *upākhyāna*, *gāthā* and others, and the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* mentions specifically that it was compiled from such earlier material.[19] There appears to have been a gradual process of data accreting to the original bardic narratives which constituted the Purāṇic tradition until, with the *brāhmaṇas* taking over the texts, they became the compendia of sectarian belief, practice, and social observances.

The earlier *Purāṇas* are the most important in terms of the genealogical data. The details of the genealogies again vary from *Purāṇa* to *Purāṇa*. Thus, the Viṣṇu *Purāṇa* has more on the Mauryan dynasty, the *Matsya* on the Āndhras and the *Vāyu* attempts to bring the genealogy upto the Gupta dynasty.[20] The *Purāṇas* did not have the same sanctity as the Vedic corpus, particularly among *brāhmaṇas*, but were respected by other castes and were the focal texts for various religious sects identifying with the central deity of the particular *Purāṇa*. Because they were not regarded as revealed and were to a larger extent explanatory texts rather than ritual texts, they would be changed and brought up-to-date with contemporary social needs. It therefore becomes difficult to date such texts as uniform compositions of a particular time. The *Purāṇas* claim that their contents come from ancient times.[21]

From the perspective of the *itihāsa-purāṇa* tradition, the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* is probably the best example as it is believed to have fewer interpolations,

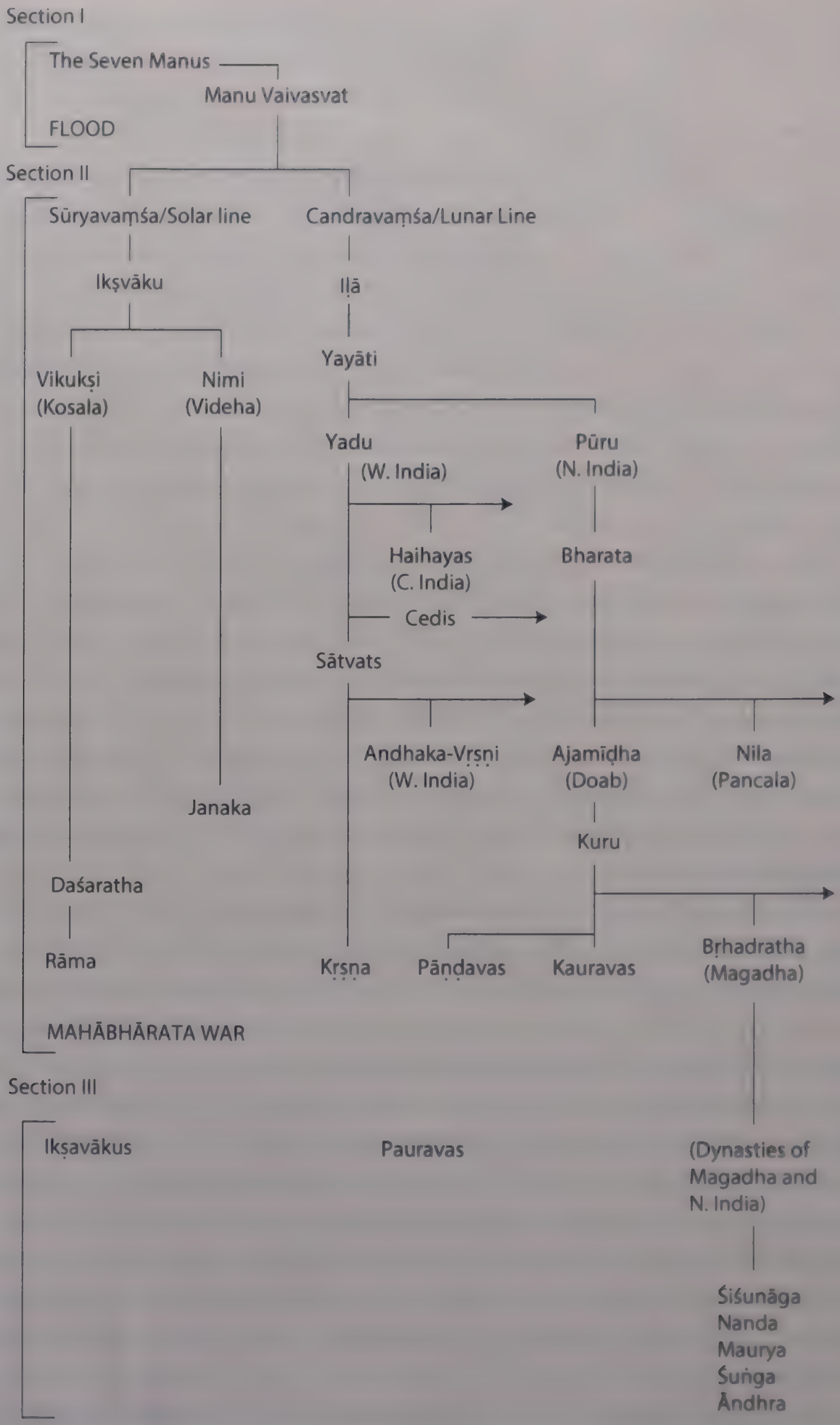
Section I
The Seven Manus
Manu Vaivasvat
FLOOD
Section II
Sūryavaṃśa/Solar line
Candravaṃśa/Lunar Line
Ikṣvāku
Iḷā
Yayāti
Vikukṣi
(Kosala)
Nimi
(Videha)
Yadu
(W. India)
Pūru
(N. India)
Haihayas
(C. India)
Bharata
Cedis
Sātvats
Andhaka-Vṛṣṇi
(W. India)
Ajamīḍha
(Doab)
Nila
(Pancala)
Janaka
Kuru
Daśaratha
Rāma
Kṛṣṇa
Pāṇḍavas
Kauravas
Bṛhadratha
(Magadha)
MAHĀBHĀRATA WAR
Section III
Ikṣavākus
Pauravas
(Dynasties of
Magadha and
N. India)
Śiśunāga
Nanda
Maurya
Śuṅga
Āndhra

FIGURE 1 The *Vaṃśānucarita* Section of the *Purāṇa*: The Succession of Rulers (This is Not to a Time Scale and is abbreviated)

maintains the format of the *pañca-lakṣana* or five facets, and is a reasonably consistent text of the sect worshipping Viṣṇu. It is also referred to, in later periods, as a continuing and important *Purāṇa*. Unlike the *Vāyu* and *Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇas*, which are believed to have been originally a single text and later separated, the composition of the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* has been consistently that of a single text.[22]

The context of the genealogical section of the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* within the broader text needs to be noticed. The structure of the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* which is believed to be a model in that it conforms to the five facets required for a *Purāṇa*, provides an outline.[23] The prelude to the genealogical section includes a description of the creation of the world as well as of the geography of the universe, thus providing both a temporal and spatial context to the central data linked to the construction of the past. The section which deals with primary creation places in context a wide sweep of the past.[24] The world was created by *Viṣṇu* and *kāla* (time) was important as a causal factor in creation. Both *kāla* and *puruṣa* (primeval man) are a part of Viṣṇu. The symbolic measurement of time, both human and divine, described in some detail provides the basis for the concept of cosmological time. The earliest events take place in the first time cycle of the *Kṛta Yuga*, the first of the four which constitute the larger time cycle of the *mahāyuga* and which are the essential components of Purāṇic eschatology.

A number of legends are narrated and these seem to have a purpose in terms of the nature of the text. Thus *Viṣṇu* in his *varāha* or boar incarnation dives into the primeval waters and brings up Pṛthivī, the earth. This is followed by his creating various categories of beings. The *Vedas* are then revealed followed by the creation of the four *varṇas*, the four categories of caste society—the castes of *brāhmaṇa*, *kṣatriya*, *vaiśya*, and *śūdra*—created so that sacrifices may be performed. The *varṇas* therefore have, in this case, a ritual context. The centrality of the sacrificial ritual is a form of purification and is contrasted with the third time cycle, the *Treta Yuga*, when sin enters human life.[25] Implicit in this notion is the equation of time with change. The perfection of the golden age of the *Kṛta Yuga* is tarnished when men and women settle in villages and towns.

The story of Pṛthu Vainya, frequently related in many texts, is recounted in its Paurāṇic version.[26] This was important since Pṛthu was a descendant of the earliest rulers, the Manus, and an ancestor of Manu Vaivasvat. We are told that the original ruler was Veṇa, but he became arrogant and refused to offer sacrifices. The *ṛṣis* having initially installed him now had no choice but to decide that he had to be killed. The sages gathered together and pierced him with the stalks of the sacred *kuśa* grass used in Vedic sacrificial rituals. Thus only those who legitimize a ruler have the right to get rid of him and this act is performed in association with a ritual object. On killing him they realized that a society cannot exist without a ruler and therefore a replacement was necessary. They churned his left thigh from which emerged the dark, ugly and quite incompetent man whom they named Niṣāda and whom they banished to the forest. On churning the right arm of Veṇa, there emerged the handsome Pṛthu Vainya, who became the legitimate ruler, introduced cattle-rearing and agriculture and ruled wisely. The earth, Pṛthivī, was named after him. Pṛthu is said to have carried the mark of Viṣṇu's *cakra* or disc and is therefore described as a *cakravartin*, the term used later for a universal emperor.

The myth captures many features of the historical perceptions of the time. The disjuncture between *grāma* and *araṇya*, the settled village and the forest, is a running thread through the perceptions of Indian social history. The superiority of pastoralism and agriculture over a society drawing on the resources of the forest becomes axiomatic to this idea. Niṣāda becomes a generic term, together with others such as Śabara and Pulinda, for hunting and gathering peoples and those who are indigenous to the forest, almost throughout Indian history.

Multiple myths follow tracing the descent of deities and suggestive of the merging of traditions.[27] Reference is made to the mindborn progeny of Brahmā, among whom are the Bhṛgu and Angiras *brāhmaṇas*,[28] who, as we shall see, play an important role in the historical tradition. The duties of the four castes are given and it is stated that in times of distress the functions may be modified. The four *āśramas* or stages of life (student, householder, hermit, ascetic) are listed as well as the rites of passage for each caste. Other matters pertaining to social obligations are included. This section reads like an encapsulation of the *dharma-śāstras* indicating social and sacred duties, setting forth the normative position.

Secondary creation is essentially concerned with the cosmos and with the geography of the earth and particularly of Jambudvīpa,[29] the land of the rose-apple tree, within which lies *Bhāratavarṣa*, generally taken to be approximately the Indian subcontinent. The universe is projected in the shape of an egg with the measurement of its size running into an infinity of space. The earth lies at the centre with seven nether regions, *pātāla*, below it where the wicked and the sinners are sent after death and which is peopled by demons, whereas above it are another six directions, the *lokas*. At the centre of the earth is Jambudvīpa, circular and surrounded by seven concentric oceans and continents. At the extreme edge is the one which separates the world from the non-world.[30]

Jambudvīpa is divided by mountain ranges into seven parts among which is *Bhāratavarṣa*. The central part is called *Ilāvṛta* which has the mount Meru at its centre, hence Meru is regarded as the centre of the universe. Whereas the wider geography is fanciful, that of *Bhāratavarṣa* is less so, even if it is not precise.[31] Geography is set in a larger canvas of cosmology referring to other continents, nether regions, space, planets and constellations, the movement of the sun and the moon and the seasons. Also included here is the legend of the hero Bharata.

Further along in the text[32] we are told that Brahmā created Manu Svyambhu (the self-born) who was followed by a sequence of seven Manus, each of whose time-period, the *manvantara* is described in detail in the third section of the text. Each is associated with a group of deities, of *ṛṣis* or sages and of sons, culminating in the Manu of the present cycle, Manu Vaivasvat. There are still more *manvantaras* to follow after the destruction of the present. Each *manvantara* is a repetition of an earlier one and the *Vedas* having disappeared at the end of the period, have to be revealed afresh and the four time cycles re-occur. The *ṛṣis* teach the *dharma* and the *Vedas* in each *manvantara*, and continuity is maintained by each group repeating what it has heard from the one in the preceding *manvantara*.[33] But the *manvantara* is not intended as a specific unit of time.

The fourth facet of the text contains the descent lists of the ruling families, the *vaṃśānucarita*. The fifth facet deals with the Kṛṣṇa incarnation of Viṣṇu and is replete with all the legends of his biography. A brief sixth section deals with further theories on the four ages and with the ultimate destruction of the world. Thus the text itself completes the cycle and the reader can return to the beginning with the description of primary creation.

III

Tradition has it that the original *Purāṇa* was taught by Vyāsa to his fifth disciple, the bard, Lomaharṣana (or Romaharṣana), who unlike his teacher, was not a *brāhmaṇa*.[34] Lomaharṣana divided the original *Purāṇa* into six parts each of which he taught to each of his six disciples. These six curiously were all *brāhmaṇas*, curious because in later times the high caste *brāhmaṇa* would not have taken instruction from the lowly bard. In addition, Lomaharṣana also taught the entire *Purāṇa* to his son, Ugraśravas, who recited it for a living. Some of the disciples of his son were *brāhmaṇas* and the rest were bards. Clearly there is an ambivalence as to whether the authorship be ascribed to *brāhmaṇas* or to bards. Doubtless this was aggravated by the genealogical material coming from the oral tradition of the bards. Most existing *Purāṇas* claim the stereotyped origin that they were revealed by a deity to a *ṛṣi* who then recited the text at a sacrifice.[35] Many of the early *Purāṇas* suggest that they were first recited in some part of northern India, but this may be just a convention.[36] The *Matsya Purāṇa* seems to refer to the Narmada valley more frequently.[37]

Scholars have differed as to whether or not the genealogical sections of the *Purāṇas* were originally preserved orally in the language of common usage,[38] Prākrit, perhaps by the bards and later rendered into Sanskrit when taken over by the *brāhmaṇas* and edited as texts.[39] The new association would have given them added status. The discussion on the original language of the texts is also tied to the question of whether or not they were in origin texts recording the history of the *kṣatriyas* as preserved by the bards, which were later taken over by the *brāhmaṇas* and re-edited.

The terms used for the bard were *sūta* and *māgadha*, both words of uncertain etymology. If *sūta* derives from the root * *su*, it would mean to impel, to consecrate, to give birth to, but the object of this activity is unclear. Could it perhaps have a link with *sūtra*, meaning a thread, where genealogies are seen as threads linking descent, though of course the bard was concerned with more than just genealogies? It might also have been connected to the Prākrit *sutta*, meaning that which is heard and referring to the oral presentation of the data. *Māgadha* is even more obscure etymologically and can only be linked to the region of south Bihar which came to be known as Magadha.

The bard had a high status initially, being included among the select group of close associates of the *rājā* especially on ritual occasions. He is included among the eight *vīras* or heroes and the eleven or so *ratnins*—literally jewels—closely connected with the *rājā*.[40] He is described as the *rājakṛt*, the maker of the *rājā* and as *ahantya* or inviolable.[41] The inviolability of the bard remained a continuing feature as late as the nineteenth century. The *sūta* was also the charioteer of the *rājā*, a profession with which he was identified almost exclusively in later times. Presumably at some point both professions had been performed by the same person. He is said to have been honoured by the sages even though he is not entitled to knowledge of the *Veda*.[42] Status in this case seems to have been different from caste since it is said on one occasion that the killing of a *sūta* amounted to the heinous crime of killing a *brāhmaṇa*, yet the same text refers to the bard as being of low caste.[43] By the turn of the Christian era, the Manu *Dharmaśāstra* ascribes a low status to the *sūta* and the *māgadha* who are said to be of mixed caste (*varṇasaṃkara*) with a *kṣatriya* father and a *brāhmaṇa* mother, and therefore born of a hypogamous union (*pratiloma*), regarded as particularly low.[44] Possibly this parentage was to enable the bard to perform functions associated with both these castes. Did this ascription of low status coincide with the taking over of the bardic tradition by the *brāhmaṇas?* The *Arthaśāstra* however does make the distinction between the ordinary *sūta* and the one who recites the *Purāṇas*, but the *māgadha* remains low.[45] In a largely oral tradition, it would be expected that there would be large numbers of persons associated with the profession of reciting narratives and compositions of various kinds, such as, the *gāthakaḥ* and the *gāyanaḥ* both of whom were singers,[46] the *kuṣilavaḥ*[47] and the *vāgajivana*.

The origin of the *sūta* and the *māgadha* as described in the *Purāṇas* is linked to the consecration ritual of the primeval ruler, Pṛthu Vainya. At the consecration of Pṛthu Vainya, supervised by the god Prajāpati, all the creatures of the world gathered for the performance of the sacrifice.[48] Out of the sacrificial fire there emerged two beings, the *sūta* and the *māgadha*, who immediately commenced reciting a *praśasti* or eulogy on the glories of Pṛthu's lineage and the deeds to be performed by him as its founder. The *sūta* and the *māgadha* were then addressed very respectfully and appointed hereditary chroniclers in the territories of Aṅga and Magadha, located on the fringes of the *ārya-varta* (the pure heartland of the *āryas*) which fringes are said to be inhabited by the *mleccha* and the *vrātya*, the impure people of low culture. Curiously in the earlier Vedic texts, Pṛthu Vainya is described as an *anekavrātya*, and the *vrātyas* were associated with the region of Magadha. The story was probably intended to provide an exalted status to those who were perhaps the original keepers of the tradition but the association appears to be with a culture regarded as somewhat alien.[49] The *vrātyas* were regarded as beyond the pale yet somehow to be appeased. Later the term was used to mean 'degenerate'. Possibly at this stage the genealogical tradition was a separate one maintained by the bards and may have been later amalgamated with other traditions when taken over by *brāhmaṇa* authors and made a part of the Purāṇic texts. The story also suggests that a bard would have a single king as patron although the patron could change his bard or retain more than one. The taking over of the narratives by the *brāhmaṇas* no doubt tended to curtail the description of the activities of the bards although such activities are retained to a larger degree in the epics. The genealogical tradition was among the major sources taken from the bards.

IV

From the Purāṇic perspective the genealogical section is a book of genesis. It is linked to the myths on the creation of the world and on the cosmology described in the earlier parts of the text, but concentrates on the genealogical record of those who have wielded power. It assumes for the earlier part the centrality of high status through birth and, therefore, access to power, and provides the descent of those of such status. It claims to provide the genealogies of all the *kṣatriyas* of *Bhāratavarṣa*, although in effect it is largely limited to northern India.

The first section refers to origins. The details having been discussed in earlier parts of the text it acts as preface to the later sections. The narrative, in the form of a dialogue between the bard and the sage, begins with the god Brahmā and descent is traced from the gods via Dakṣa, Aditi and Sūrya to the seven Manus who ruled at the beginning of time. The name Manu is of course linked to *mānava*, mankind. The seven Manus are associated with enormous time spans. During the reign of the seventh Manu there occurs the great Flood which destroys everything but from which Manu survives to become the ancestor to the two major *kṣatriya* lineages, the Suryavaṃśa or the Solar line and the Candravaṃśa or the Lunar line.[50]

The story of the Flood is first mentioned in the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*, a part of the Vedic corpus, and is repeated in the *Mahābhārata* and the much later *Matsya Purāṇa*, although the versions differ.[51] The *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* version relates that Manu, performing his morning ablutions finds a fish in his cupped hands and rears it until it reaches an enormous size. It divulges the intention of the gods to drown the earth in a deluge for no apparent reason. Wishing to save Manu from this disaster it orders him to build a boat which is tied to the horn of the fish. It then swims through the waters and lodges the boat on a northern mountain.

From here Manu returned when the waters subsided. Being alone and desirous of sons he performed a sacrifice from which however a daughter was born whom he named significantly, *Iḍā/Iḷā*, literally, sacrificial food or a libation. Through her in turn were born his descendants. Thus the restoration of life has to be brought about through ritual and there is an interweaving of sacrifice and procreation.[52] There has also been some discussion as to whether the horn of the fish symbolizes the *yūpa* or the sacrificial post, all of which would have underlined the centrality of ritual to the question of origins. Some texts also speak of the introduction of the plough and agriculture by the gods.[53] In the *Mahābhārata* version, the ship carries not only Manu but the seven *ṛṣis* and the seeds of all creatures, and the fish declares itself to be Brahmā who has ordained that Manu will be the source of all creation. In the *Matsya Purāṇa* the fish becomes an incarnation of Viṣṇu. The deity in this form predicts first a drought and then a flood. The ship is to carry Manu, various deities, some embodied rivers, a sage, the *Vedas* and *Purāṇas* and various branches of knowledge. The inclusion of the Purāṇic texts is of course important to the status of the *Matsya Purāṇa* itself.

Of all the multiplicity of Flood stories from various parts of the world, the versions in the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* and the *Mahābhārata* parallel most closely the story in the earlier Mesopotamian texts.[54] These texts speak of the creation of man, and the reasons for punishing man, both of which as themes are absent in the Purāṇic version. The former refer to the seven pre-diluvian kings with inordinately long reigns and the survivor who is associated with the descent of kingship onto various cities of Mesopotamia. The seven sages are also mentioned. Regnal years use figures similar to those given in the Purāṇic time cycles, such as 1200, 32,400, and 64,800. The figure of 1200 is mentioned as the last segment of time in which the population increased and became a source of irritation to the gods. Each successive cycle is said to be of 4800 years. These figures are repeated by the Babylonian Berossus with reference to Chaldean chronology where mention is made of 36,000 and 64,800 years. Berossus writes of ten patriarchs from Adam to Noah and of ten kings from the creation to the Flood, ascribing to them a period of 432,000 years.[55] He also mentions eight sages who are involved and the first of these is fish-like in appearance. The Sumerian god Enki who saves mankind is often represented as a fish in later Mesopotamian mythology. Interestingly the reign lengths of the postdiluvian kings drop stunningly to very credible levels such as three or four years. The Flood seems to mark a change from a more mythical past to a more real past.

Given the close connections between the Harappans and the Mesopotamians, the story may have been current in Harappan times and come down as part of an earlier tradition or may have been picked up later from Assyrian sources. What is significant is that the beginning of history in Purāṇic terms is traced to a myth which has links not with Indo-European sources but with those in west Asia. Could the story have travelled from Mesopotamia to India through the traders of the third millennium BC and then have become part of the mythology which was handed down through the generations in northern India? The Iranian variant of the story which one would expect to be similar, given the closeness between Old Iranian and Indo-Aryan, in fact differs considerably and it is not the narrative of a flood but a freeze resulting from endless winters which brings life to a standstill. The earth also suffers from overcrowding, thus echoing the Mesopotamian version. The ark is not a ship but a cubical enclosure which eventually is placed inside a mountain.

The *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* version does not describe the creation of man and no explanation is given for why there should have been a flood—unlike the Sumerian version where the Flood is a form of punishment, both to prevent the further growth of population and to stop the rising noise levels resulting from an increase among people. In the Indian version the Flood is not punitive. There is however another story which echoes some strains of a Mesopotamian myth and that is the story of the *Varāha* or boar incarnation of Viṣṇu, in which the earth, burdened by the weight of over-population of sinful humans, sinks into the ocean and has to be lifted out on the tusk of the boar. It is possible that the idea of the Flood legend was borrowed from Mesopotamian sources. In both accounts there is the further similarity of the Flood preceding rulership, although it has been argued that the king-list in the Mesopotamian account was added onto the story of the Flood. That the human race was barbarous to begin with and was civilized through the intervention of the gods is an idea common to many origin myths.

The Flood assumes the primary precondition of water from out of which the known creation arises. It is recognised as a stage in the cycle of time, perhaps what Eliade would call the abolition of profane time,[56] where the Flood is a marker, separating a time of origins from later events. The beginnings of history emerge from a condition which has no antecedents. Manu acquires prestige through being chosen to survive. This in turn gives added prestige to those who claim descent from him and who are listed in the second section of the genealogical record.

V

The second section of the genealogical record introduces the children of Manu. In the Purāṇic version, Manu had ten sons and subsequently one who was a hermaphrodite. These children, particularly the first and the last are eponymous ancestors of the various descent groups listed in detail. The term used is *vaṃśam rājñyam* and this 'succession of *rājās*' is not grouped into dynasties but into lists of lineages, literally claiming a line of descent from a common ancestor and are also referred to as *kṣatriyas*. The descent groups are worked out in a neat structure of genealogical patterns. Interspersed within the lists are legends and myths, sometimes almost at regular intervals, suggesting perhaps points of change or break.

These legends are not arbitrary. Many are variants on what were referred to as *itihāsa* in earlier Vedic sources, their choice thus being deliberate. They provide clues to social custom and define the ethos of the *kṣatriya*. Included among these are the *digvijayas* or world conquests typified by heroes such as Mandhātri and Sagara, and the *svayamvara* or the choice by an eligible *kṣatriya* bride of a husband from among an assembled gathering of *kṣatriyas*. Both these are important to events in the epics, expressive of the character of heroic societies but take on a different connotation in later periods. The *digvijaya* suggests that lands were open to conquest by those who could so organise themselves. This may well have included new clans or the taking over by less established groups who sought legitimacy by claiming to have performed the *digvijaya* and demonstrating thereby that the older line had failed to protect its rights. The listing of areas claimed to have been conquered is also a mechanism of defining one's own territory. The significance of the *svayamvara* was also to underline the importance of marriage alliances to bolster power. To weave such legends into the genealogy is to remind the audience of what is being invoked from the past.

Manu's eldest son Ikṣvāku, the progenitor of the Solar line has three sons, two of whom are important and establish themselves at Kosala and

Videha, contiguous territories in the middle Ganga plain and important to the narrative of the *Rāmāyaṇa*. The rulers of Kosala and Videha are therefore seen as belonging to colateral lines. The *Rāmāyaṇa* is the epic of the Sūryavaṃśa. The form of this genealogy is the presumed record of descent from father to eldest son. Younger sons are not mentioned barring exceptional cases. Collaterals can be set aside when the purpose is to record the transmission of property and office. The emphasis implies a system respecting genealogical seniority and the list of names come down in parallel columns. Patrilineal descent is heavily underlined as also the unchallenged right to succession of the eldest son. Thus the narrative of the *Rāmāyaṇa* as an epic becomes all the more meaningful in relation to those features of social and political life.

The *Rāmāyaṇa*[57] preserves a list which differs from those in the *Purāṇas* and is shorter by a few generations. Lengthening or shortening within sections of the lists is not uniform and in this process a few relationships may also be altered, others may be omitted and sometimes new names added. Contradictions such as generational differences between the time of Rāma and Sītā in the Purāṇic lists are not corrected. Lengthening either through added numbers or extended father to son succession, is generally associated with more centralized societies. Whereas such succession need not be accurate over an extended period, since it suppresses other categories of succession, nevertheless it does point to a relatively stable political and social situation. The *Purāṇas* appear to have telescoped the earlier generations, a technique often used by genealogists and described recently as 'structural amnesia'. This pattern of linear descent may be an attempt to indicate the more durable polity of a monarchy. The *Rāmāyaṇa* reflects this in the contrast between the kingdom of Kosala and other less developed regions such as Kishkindha and Dandakaranya. The contrast may well have been motivated in part by poetic fancy, but the consistency with which it is adhered to would suggest that it carried some implicit notions of the society associated with the Sūryavaṃśa being better established.

From the female half of Manu's child, Iḷā, are descended a vast spread of clans classified as Candravaṃśa. Women standing at the apex of a clan or myths of celestial women as the mothers of heroes may be suggestive of a different kind of clan organisation.[58] The genealogical pattern of the Lunar line varies from that of the Solar. It records the descent of all the sons, at least in the early part of the genealogy, and each forms a segment of the main lineage. The lists of descent, far from coming down in neat parallels, fan out laterally and inevitably cover a larger geographical space. The obvious suggestion is that segments of these clans were given to migrating, but this pattern may also be seen as attempts to assimilate other groups especially those settled in the areas under discussion. Thus the pattern of the Yādava segments of the Lunar line seems particularly prone to fanning out or incorporating new groups as they are said to have spread over large areas of western and central India. This is a considerable contrast to the static nature of the Ikṣvāku descendants who seem hardly able to move away from the middle Ganga plain. The fanning out of the clans listed as the descendants of Ilā, involved situations of conflict and these are referred to, such as the attack on Ayodhyā by the Haihayas, a branch of the Yādavas who are said to have had their stronghold at Mahiṣmati on the Narmada river.

Repeated patterns include that of five sons, three from one wife and two from another, which come early and late and often in between. The story of Purūravas and Urvaśī is retold with some variance from the versions in the Vedic corpus and their five sons become ancestral to descendants in the Lunar line. The five sons of the famous Yayāti, and eldest Yadu and the youngest Pūru, are ancestors to the most significant segments of this lineage and form a major part of the Lunar line.[59] Pūru, inspite of being the youngest son, inherits the core of the territory and Yadu migrates to the south-west. A myth is introduced to explain this reversal of primogeniture. The main line of the Pūrus controls the Ganga *doāb*. Their descendants at a much later generational date are contestants in claims to this territory.

However, inspite of the seemingly smooth descent, there are also some barely disguised breaks in succession. An obvious break is the story of Bharata adopting a son, Bharadvāja, since none of his sons were suitable. Further along in the line of descent, Hastin is followed by three sons each of whom have the suffix *mīdha* in their names, suggesting 'spurinyms'. Another break is the story of Devāpi and Śantanu which takes us back to the *itihāsas* of the Vedic corpus. The story is given a new twist in the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa*.[60] For twelve years there was no rain in the kingdom of Śantanu since he had both usurped the throne from his elder brother Devāpi and also married before him. Normally, according to the *brāhmaṇas*, Devāpi should have been recalled from the forest where he was now an ascetic and placed on the throne. But Śantanu had a wily minister who sent a group of heretics to the forest to teach their doctrines to the innocent Devāpi. Thus when the *brāhmaṇas* set out to fetch Devāpi they were appalled by his anti-Vedic views and this was sufficient for them to annul his rights to the throne. The elder brother having thus been disqualified, there was no longer any sin in the younger ruling in his stead. Consequently, the drought ended with Indra pouring down rain.

The *Matsya Purāṇa* clinches the argument further by stating that Devāpi was a leper and therefore had to live in the forest. A physical ailment would automatically disqualify him from ruling. The *Mahābhārata* has a similar version. The significance of the story is of course that it concerns Śantanu, whose son Vicitravīrya had married Amba and Ambālika, the daughters of the *rājā* of Kāśi, but who had died childless. His wives were then required to bear children who were fathered by Kṛṣṇa Dvaipāyana (or Veda Vyāsa, incidentally also the supposed author of the *Mahābhārata*). A son each was born, Dhṛitrāṣṭra and Pāṇḍu, the fathers respectively of the Kauravas and the Pāṇḍavas, the two sets of cousins involved in the great battle at Kurukṣetra. Thus neither the Pāṇḍavas nor the Kauravas, the main contenders for power in the *doāb* were actually related by blood to the Pūru line, which in fact terminated with Bhīṣma of their grandfather's generation. Such breaks may be seen as seams in the genealogical stitching. The Candravaṃśa lineages are the ones most substantially involved in the events of the *Mahābhārata* which interestingly is classified as *itihāsa*, claiming that its events may have happened in the past. The genealogical construction in the *Purāṇas* ties together the scattered stories of persons, and places the latter into a framework which draws on the past. This can also be seen as an attempt at unifying the segments. The new entrants can either come in laterally via a marriage alliance or vertically as inheritors and successors.

Artificial lengthening of the descent list is evident from the use of toponyms and geographical names in the list. Thus there is mention of the five sons of Bali as Anga, Vanga, Kaliṅga, Suhma and Puṇḍra.[61] Some of these names occur as clan names of the peoples of eastern India in the geographical section of the same *Purāṇa*.[62] In other sources they occur as the names of territories. These would also come under the category of what have been called 'spurinyms'.[63] Scattered through the lists are close associations of some clans with geographically identified areas. Mahiṣmati on the Narmada is the location of the Haihayas and Kāśī or Varanasi of the Kasus.

Customs such as bride-price, marriage by abduction, cross-cousin marriage and fraternal polyandry, not entirely approved of in the normative texts, occur in the stories punctuating the descent lists of the Lunar line, reflecting a variety of kinship systems, some dissimilar from those of the Solar line.[64] Could these have been elements of a matrilineal society or more likely, indicative of horticulture and pastoralism rather than a well-settled agricultural community?[65] These clans seem to be much given to political relationships of alliance through marriage. These could be non-lineal and incorporating a wide network over a large geographical area.

The Lunar line does not invariably claim to list a father to son succession. The relationship between generations is frequently left ambiguous with statements such as 'B' followed 'A' or, 'B' was the heir of 'A', or 'B' was of 'A' or 'B' was after 'A'.[66] This is in contrast to the more specific mention of 'B' being the son of 'A'.[67] It is less a list of personal names and more that of clans with some association of territory as well. Many are clan names known from other sources, such as the Cedis, Andhakas, Bhojas and so on.

The geography and migration of the Lunar line and of the Yadus in particular, would include western and central India, the Narmada and the Vindhyas and large parts of the edge of the Ganga plain; a far wider spread than the more concise circuit of the Solar line in the middle Ganga plain and just south of it. This genealogical pattern can be suggestive of either the migration or the assimilation of clans. The inclusion of some geographical locations may well reflect a wish to suggest marriage alliances, so crucial to controlling power in clan-based societies. Alternatively, it could be the attempt of genealogists arbitrarily grouping varieties of peoples into neat genealogical packages except that the packages do not seem to be arbitrary. There appears also to have been a consciousness of geographical space and the attempt to portion out space by locational links among the clans.

VI

A little digression at this point, touching on aspects significant to the patterns of these two descent groups may be in order. Setting aside the question of the veracity of genealogies, these as a form of remembering the past were central to the society of the Ganga valley and its fringes in the period prior to the rise of states. The oral tradition had, as its repertoire, recitations in praise of heroes past and present. Heroic values were necessary to clans in the context of frequent cattle raids as well as disputes over clearing and settling land. Where agriculture became the rationale for occupying land, settlements would be subject to attack if they encroached on existing habitations.

The clearing and settling of land called for an organised migration often led by *kṣatriya* families. Land thus settled came to be named after the dominant *kṣatriya* clan which ultimately claimed both territorial identity and ownership. This was seminal to the eventual instituting of the state. The clan chief or *rājā* eventually evolved into the king. The lineage claimed by the dominant clan determined the identity of those regarded as the most respected. The major *kṣatriya* clans occupied the area from the watershed to the middle Ganga valley—the clans of the Kuru, Pañcāla, Matsya, Vatsa, Kāśī, Kosala, and Videha. Those of lesser status were on the fringes of the area. The Yadus had their base in western India from where they are said to have moved into central India. The picture has some parallels with the distribution of archaeological cultures in the first millennium BC.

In the early half of the first millennium there are two foci. One is the Ganga-Yamuna *doāb*, and its fringes, which coincides broadly with the Kuru–Pañcāla region, incidentally also the core area of the events of the *Mahābhārata*. The archaeology of this region goes back to the late second millennium with the Ochre Colour Pottery and the Painted Grey Ware as the dominant cultures. The second is the middle Ganga region which comes into prominence with the settlements of Black-and-Red Ware cultures, with possible connections to proximate places in central India and to an earlier distribution of sites in western India.[68] In both areas new arrivals had to relate to existing populations, albeit small groups. It is only with the growth of urbanization in the mid-first millennium BC that the network of the Ganga plain is drawn closer together and Magadha in south Bihar gradually emerges as the dominant region.[69]

The archaeological picture suggests a demographic change in favour of a rise in settlements. Migrating groups tend to claim high status or to invent links with high status groups where migration involves assimilation with existing populations. Genealogical records were therefore important but could be tampered with as required. Such records assume greater importance when there are tensions over rights to land and political authority in conditions of nascent kingship.

There was now an increasing social distance between those who had access to economic resources and particularly the private ownership of these, and those who worked to produce the resources. Enhanced caste differentiation would also demand a record of the genealogies of those claiming power and ownership of land, and more so where there was competition for both. When claims to territorial identity declined, genealogies still functioned as important indicators of marriage alliances, especially those underwriting political power. Current ideas on the origin of government supported the notion of a single person holding office as king, whether as an appointee of the gods or as elected by the community. The right to collect taxes ensured further power as did the right to coerce, which was given to the ruler on the assumption that it was necessary for the preservation of law and order. Such an accumulation of rights points to the establishment of monarchical states similar to that at Magadha on which there is much evidence. The epics through their later interpolations become charters of validation supporting the legitimacy of such states as a new form of political organisation.

That genealogies were included in ritual texts is not surprising. Attempts were also made in other texts to suggest authenticity by co-relating the succession lists of priests with those of kings performing sacrificial rituals. Sanctification is an obvious means of preservation. But the ritual of sacrifice, apart from its religious meaning, was also the occasion for establishing the social status of a clan chief and for reiterating relations of exchange. It was the occasion when the clan gathered, when social underpinnings were made evident not only by the ritual but also by the display, the consumption and the destruction of wealth; and where the gradually increasing distance between the *rājā* emerging as king and the rest of the clan, the *viś*, was established. The *brāhmaṇas* associated themselves with the focus of power and one form of this association was to gradually appropriate the past of those in power.

The reconstruction of this past in the form of genealogies provides pointers to its social and political concerns. The deeds of individual heroes familiar from the epics are narrated in summary form in the *Purāṇas* as part of a genealogy. What is important therefore is not that the genealogies do not always tally in various sources, but that the function of this data suggests a changed historical situation. Genealogies creating a continuous, seemingly unbroken past relate to societies where descent groups are more central than institutions. This pattern however changes once again in the last section of the *vaṃśānucarita* or narration of succession in the *Purāṇas* when a new form comes to be recorded.

VII

The second time-marker in the sense of an event indicating a major change comes with the end of these lists when the clans are involved in a war which few survive. Catastrophes are time-markers and initiate new periods. The immensity of the disaster caused by this war is suggested in the attempt to shift the start of the present time cycle, the *Kali-yuga*, from Manu surviving the Flood to the descendants of those who survived the war. The metaphor of water and ocean, reminiscent of the Flood, is used frequently in the description of the battle. As described in the *Mahābhārata*, the war arises out of the hostility between the descendants of the Pūrus but almost every *kṣatriya* clan and *rājā*, are said to have taken sides and are, by and large, wiped out. The war is seen as the end of an epoch, or as the *Purāṇas* put it, the ending of the splendour of the *kṣatriyas*. The world is not the same subsequent to this and politics undergoes a substantial change. This is reflected in distinctly new features of the genealogical record.

Subsequent to the *Mahābhārata* war, statements about what follows are made in the future tense even though the text was compiled centuries later. Thus says the narrator, 'I will now enumerate the kings who will reign in the future periods....'[70] The past lay in events which took place before the war. It imbues the narrator with the extraordinary power of prophecy. The implication also seems to be that those who control the past have access to the future. Happily the switch to the future tense provides us today with a clue as to approximately when the text was compiled since the prophecy has to stop with a contemporary dynasty. The prophetic form did not, however, prevent variations among the *Purāṇas* on what was to follow. A few further descendants of the Sūryavaṃśa or Solar line and the Candravaṃśa or Lunar line, are listed but more now as a rounding off of the descent groups. Among the former, mention is made of the Buddha and his clan, his father and his son; among the latter, the focus shifts from the upper *doāb* to the lower *doāb*, a migration necessitated by the flooding of the Ganga and the destruction of the earlier capital at Hastināpur, leading to a new settlement at Kauśāmbi, near the confluence of the

Ganga and Yamuna. These generations are also referred to as *nṛpa*, the protector of men, but are not given any regnal years. Dynastic history is traced through the line of Magadha (in south Bihar) and the first dynasty mentioned together with the regnal years of its members, was that of the Bṛhadratha dynasty of Magadha.

Another change is the statement made by the bard in the preamble to this section, that the kings listed shall include those who are of mixed caste, those regarded as outcaste (*vrātya*), those who are of lower caste (*advija*), the *śūdras*, foreigners and others of impure origin (*mleccha*), and those who are upstarts (*udit-odit vaṃśa*). This was a concession to political power being negotiable and open to those who did not even have to claim to be *kṣatriyas*. As the texts put it, the splendid *kṣatriya* stock is brought to an end. The succession of *kṣatriyas* was replaced by kings listed by dynasty, together with their regnal years and referred to more impersonally as *nṛpa*, the protector of men. Whereas previously the succession was that of the *vaṃśam rājñyam*, the later lists of dynasties are a full account of all the different kings and their successive transactions.[71]

The early Śiśunāga dynasty is permitted a minor concession in that the kings are described as having *kṣatriya* kinsfolk—*rājānaḥ kṣatra bāndhavah*. Of the Nandas it is specifically said that they will exterminate all *kṣatriyas*—*kṣatra vināsa kṛt*—therefore subsequent kings will be *śūdras*. Nevertheless the Nandas are described as *eka-chātram*, sole monarchs. The *brāhmaṇa* Kauṭilya, we are told, will uproot the Nandas and anoint Candragupta as king, who will found the Maurya dynasty. Puṣyamitra Śuṅga will uproot Bṛhadratha, the last of the Mauryas. Vāsudeva, the minister, will overthrow the last of the Śuṅgas and establish the Kaṇva dynasty, which is referred to as the Śuṅgabhṛtya, literally the servant of the Śuṅga, where the term *bhṛtya* is perhaps better translated as 'in the service of'.[72] This could refer to those in administrative office who, relying on the use of force as well as the authority of office, rose to kingship. The Āndhras are also the *bhṛtyas* of the Kaṇvas and are succeeded in turn by their *bhṛtyas*. A long list of successors are then listed. The Guptas, mentioned towards the end of the list, will rule over the *janapadas* (territories) of Gaṅgā, Prayāga, Sāketa and Magadha.

Such statements are new to the account and underline the capturing of political power. (Dynasties described here as evidently foreign, such as the Śakas and Yavanas, do however sometimes add *kṣatriya* suffixes to their names in their inscriptions).[73] The reckoning of kings by regnal years was a concession to a measured concept of time. The exaggerated lengthening of regnal years in the early part of the dynastic section was probably to give the sanctity of antiquity to monarchy. The concept of generations is also different as compared to the earlier section where a generation was counted from birth. Now, a generation was listed when a king assumed office since only regnal periods in each dynasty are recorded.

The third section is essentially one of non-*kṣatriya* kings where dynasties changed with the arrival of new families through conquest and otherwise where the administrators seem to have usurped power. There is a gradual increase in dynasties which do not even claim to have been *dvijas* or twice-born, pointing to a new understanding of political power. Legitimation is not through a ritual sacrifice conducted by *brāhmaṇa* priests but through the assertion of power. This was done either through conquest or through exercising administrative control. This social condition would conform to the statement that in the *Kali-yuga*, caste hierarchies and functions are overturned; inevitably, therefore, those in power would be of lower castes and outsiders. However, in subsequent times, latching onto the *kṣatriya* genealogies was to become one of the methods of legitimizing dynasty. Change in the nature of the polity in the post-Gupta period from about the seventh century AD onwards, led to the emergence of new claims to kṣatriyahood. This is mentioned in the third section of the *vaṃśānucarita* when it speaks of a king of Magadha creating another *kṣatriya* caste.

VIII

What are we to make of all this information? Attempts at establishing an order in the genealogies was made by Wilson in the nineteenth century and by Pargiter at the start of this century.[74] Pargiter was less interested in the genealogical patterns and what these may be stating and more in trying to identify the different descent groups. This was easier for the third section dealing with dynasties for many of them could be co-related with other sources. Pargiter's plea that the data be treated seriously was well-taken but unfortunately his identifications of the descent groups with the Aryan, Dravidian, and Austro-Asiatic was misleading and his attempt to see Aryan expansion in the genealogies was not tenable, so too similar attempts by later scholars. The *Purāṇas* make no such distinction.

The Pūrus for example, whose 'aryan' identity is doubtful even from other sources since they speak a *mṛdhra vāc* (impure language) and are said to be descended from the *asura rākṣasa*,[75] are given an important status in the genealogies. Those of an equally important Yādava descent—from Yadu—include persons who do not have a high status in some other texts. Thus, the Vṛṣṇis and the Andhakas are referred to as *vrātyas* and the people of Saurashtra, associated with the Yādavas, as belonging to mixed castes.[76] The contradiction between the *Purāṇas* listing them as *kṣatriyas* and *rājās* and other sources referring to their lower status can perhaps be resolved if it is argued that the Purāṇic lists were concerned only with those who constituted the chiefs of clans. Whatever their actual status might have been in the caste ranking given them by *brāhmaṇa* theoreticians, in the historical perspective of the dynastic lists they were seen as societies with *rājās* and included in particular descent groups. The construction of the descent group, therefore, was another kind of statement, setting out the location, alliances and politics of clans as perceived from a later perspective. Inclusion in a particular descent group was also a pointer to the kind of political society associated with the clan. It is significant that the more motley list of clans is included under the Candravaṃśa and not the Sūryavaṃśa.

IX

Chronologies of Indian history and concepts of time based on these genealogies have been attempted on the assumption that since many dynasties of the third section are historically attested, the earlier genealogies should also be taken literally.[77] Some historians have tried to compute generational length in India averaging fourteen or even twenty-seven years,[78] going back to 3102 BC, the date calculated from an inscription of the seventh century AD for the start of the Kali-yuga.[79] Reign lengths vary according to the stability of the polity and stable dates tend to support longer reigns.[80] Uninterrupted direct descent from father to son among dynasties rarely exceeds five or six reigns.[81] The Purāṇic lists however were not meant to be treated as chronologically precise and although time is important to genealogical reconstructions they were at best approximate.

The dimension of time is inevitably present in all attempts to build an image of the past and time plays a central role in the genealogical patterns as well. We have seen that these are placed within the framework of cosmology and it would seem that varying concepts of time are used to differentiate cosmological notions from those perceived as historical. Included in the *Purāṇas*, therefore, are theories of time where the sequence of time is viewed in different ways, cosmological, genealogical and linear, and this introduces a chronological framework. The grand theory of time, the theory of the *yugas* is a play on the concept of time, a metaphor at many levels.[82] It is used in varying contexts: from the vastness of the aeons running into thousands of years, to the minutiae of the blinking of an eye; from time originating as part of the cosmos to time determining the ethics of an age or to time seen in a spatial form. This is not time which is subject to calibration.

Purāṇic chronology is based on the *manvantara* but also on the calculation of two eras, the *Kali-yuga* of *c.* 3102 BC and the Saptarṣi of *c.* 3176 BC, where the two eras seem to act as a bridge between the infinity of the *manvantara* cycles and the shorter spans of time calculated in the eras. Each major time cycle, *mahāyuga* or great cycle, also referred to as the *cāturyuga* of four cycles, is divided into four cycles, the *yugas*—Kṛta (or Satya), Dvāpara, Treta and Kali—the names (except for one), derived from the numbers at the throw of dice from the highest to the lowest and therefore carrying the suggestion of fate implicit in time. The condition of man and the world has changed from the earliest times which were Utopian to the ultimate decline in the fourth *yuga*, the *kali-yuga*, which is the current cycle. *Dharma*, sometimes represented as a bull that stood on all four legs to begin with, has, at the end of each *yuga* lost one leg. Each *yuga* is measured in specific numbers of years and these are 4000, 3000, 2000 and 1000 respectively, interspersed with a dawn and a twilight time which are each one-tenth of the length of the *yuga*, thus, reading as 4800, 3600, 2400 and 1200. The figures for the four decline in arithmetic progression, from 4800 to 1200 divine years, where each divine year has to be multiplied by 360 to convert it to human years. The total cycle of 12,000 divine years is therefore equivalent to 4,320,000 human years. A thousand *mahāyugas* make a *kalpa*, an aeon, each of which is followed by the destruction of the world often through a great deluge. This further underlined the myth of the Flood. The reckoning based on the *kalpa* is also tied to the *manvantara* calculation where the *kalpa* is equivalent to one day of Brahmā in which there are fourteen Manus, so that each *manvantara* is equal to about seventy-one *mahāyugas*. This is truly an infinity of time or almost a sense of time which is without beginning or end.[83]

There appears to have been an attempt to draw on figures from astronomy, perhaps to suggest exactitude, given that the mid-first millennium AD was an active period in Indian astronomy. The *Purāṇas* reflect some of the information on mathematics and astronomy current during this period. The figures also occur as we have seen, in Babylonian astronomy and it has been argued that Indian astronomers were familiar with Babylonian ideas by about *c.* 400 BC.[84] The basic parameter of the *yuga* system was the *Kali-yuga* of 432,000 years, which is the figure for the pre-diluvian kings in Babylonian sources and which in turn is based on the sexagesimal system (2 × 60/3), a system also in use in India. To this was added the decimal system commonly known to Indian mathematics and a *kalpa* was calculated as 1000 *mahāyugas* or *cāturyugas*. The four *yugas* were then placed in descending order of 4:3:2:1. The cyclic notion was closely related to the idea of the revolution of heavenly bodies and a number of cycles of time were in current use. Among the more popular were the five-year luni-solar cycle of the Jyotiṣa-Vedāṅga texts on astrology reconciling the lunar and solar calendars, and the Saptarṣi era, and imaginary cycle of about 2700 or 2800 years, based on the theory that the constellation of the Saptarṣi or Great Ḅear stays for a hundred years in each of the twenty-seven or twenty-eight *nakṣatras* (asterisms). From the sixth century AD, the cycle of Bṛhaspati or Jupiter became popular and was often computed as a complete cycle of sixty years. That there was some conflict between Purāṇic cosmology and the cosmology of the astronomers is evident from texts by the latter questioning the former.[85]

The notion of this infinite scale of time was an attempt to build it into a concept of cosmology very different from measured time. Was this reflective of a tension between those who sought the sanction of cosmological time for a record of the past and those who wanted a more precise time reckoning? Or was the association of cosmic time with the past yet another device to maintain at one level, the otherness of the past? Cosmological time circumscribes all other time systems, but it does not exclude other time systems such as generational and linear time. The fantasy of numbers in this scheme of cosmological time has been read as a 'refusal of history'.[86] It would seem more appropriate, however, to see it as an attempt at distancing a mythical past by framing it in a time concept which was palpably unreal. Not all the Purāṇic versions agree on the details of the four *yugas*,[87] thus underlining the symbolic character of the idea.

Varying concepts of time can also be used to demarcate historical change. Time cycles of immense scale can also be methods of pushing back the past so that primary creation, as in this case, belongs to a time which is virtually beyond human conception. The Golden Age, located in this early time period, is also easier to handle and describe since it can extend to any limits of fantasy. This may also have had another reason. One of the ways in which conflict between *smṛti* texts was resolved, was to maintain that some, recording customs in contradiction of those currently practiced, were legislating for a bygone age.[88] Such an age would have to be extremely distant in time so that the practice be relegated truly to the past.

Genealogies become a form of sequential reckoning. To record the past in a genealogical form could suggest that there was a core tradition which might have been relatively fixed, but that other material could have been changed. The *Purāṇas* have to change in keeping with changes in every *yuga*. Therefore, the contents of the *Purāṇas* were not sacrosanct in the way the *Vedas* were.

References to regnal years and dynastic time periods suggestive of linear time in the third section of the *vaṃśānucarita*, were of a very different order from cosmic time and genealogical time. This may have had to do with the currency of eras and dates used in other sources in the period when the *Purāṇas* were composed, the commonly used ones being the Kṛta or Vikram Samvat of *c.* 58 BC, the Śaka era of AD 78, and the Gupta era of AD 319–20. Equally popular were the Kali-yuga later traced back in some reckonings to the equivalent of 3102 BC and the Laukika era of 3076–75 BC,[89] both of which occur in official records in the post-Gupta period. It may also have had to do with the impact of a culture given increasingly to literacy.

Time as a cycle does not eliminate the past and the future, since the cycle terminates in destruction and a new cycle follows. The inordinate length of the cosmological time cycle is to underline the idea of timelessness. The universe had a beginning in cosmological time which is described as a generative factor. Only later does a different, generationally measured time, under human control come into historical reckoning. Implicit in this is also a distinction between the history of the universe viewed in an infinity of time and the history of man which was subject to exact measurement. The latter was also made apparent in the meticulous measurement of time in astrology which centres on the past and future of the individual.

In terms of eschatology, the Golden Age was in the remote past, in the beginnings of time, after which there has been a steady decline, from *dharma* to *adharma*. The link between time and the moral condition is described in the social decline which will prevail towards the latter part of the *Kali-yuga*. The rulers will be of impure origin, and their subjects will be oppressed; the *varṇa* ordering will be discarded and castes will move away from their allotted functions. Vedic rites will not be observed and even the *brāhmaṇas* will lose their code of ethics. The change in the social condition becomes an allegory of a sense of historical change.

X

We are told that the *Purāṇas* have to keep pace with changes in every *yuga*. A fixed tradition was not required (which incidentally makes it difficult to date them). Nevertheless something of a tradition does emerge, and in the *vaṃśānucarita* section it indicates changes in the past. The gods and the sages are associated with the beginnings of history. The founder of a descent group has a special relationship with deity which establishes his unique position. Descent from the founder has a noticeable pattern, such as that differentiated in the Solar and Lunar lines, and this pattern presumes a historical condition. The difference possibly points to variant claims to and forms of political power and becomes both the source and the expression of the legitimation of such power. Attempts to chart the major *kṣatriya* clans after the Flood are also attempts to fill in geographical space.

To name the lineages after the sun and the moon seems in no way peculiar. These two planets often have contrasted characteristics such as that the sun is seen as the male symbol and the moon as the female, a contrast which is also suggested in the pattern of the descent groups. Seniority seemed to lie with the Solar line since Ikṣvāku is mentioned as the eldest child of Manu and there is some confusion over the gender identity of Iḷā. Taken more literally, the sun outshines the moon and this must certainly have been observed by the time that these texts were written. The symbolic frequency of the sun and the moon is noticeable especially in Tantric and Yogic texts, where the sun and the moon symbolize the two main nerve centres to the right and the left in the human body and their unity is sought in certain Yogic practices.[90] This may suggest an interaction with what seem to have been regarded as substratum groups. Taken together, the sun and the moon denote permanency in the iconography of this period, doubtless arising from their association with calendrical time. Both the Solar and the Lunar calendar were in use but associated with different social functions. If the Solar calendar determined the agricultural year, the Lunar calendar set out the rituals.

The difference in the recording of ruling families as dynasties after the *Mahābhārata* war indicates the perception of difference in the nature of power under a system of monarchical states. The *Mahābhārata* war is the watershed in the periodisation of the past as viewed from Purāṇic sources. Whereas earlier all the descent groups were included under the umbrella terms of *rājā* or *kṣatriya* now, on the contrary, the social status of individual dynasties is separately indicated, the assumption being that kṣatriyahood was not a prerequisite for monarchy. The acquisition of power now confers rank, and therefore a dynasty of Hellenistic origin, the Yavana, is described as *vrātya-kṣatriya* or degenerate *kṣatriya*. Dynastic succession is a pointer to the existence of states which now take precedence over non-state, clan-held territories. The establishment of the monarchical state involved a different set of institutions from those of preceding political forms and, therefore, a different basis of royal power.

If the relationship between descent groups was stated symbolically, that between dynasties is direct and clear. Where a ruling family was subordinate to the previous dynasty it is described as the *bhṛtya*. There are no claims to lineage links connecting dynasties and thereby there is a negation of the importance of lineage in this section. Political power seems to be a sufficient base for claiming legitimacy.

An important and not unconnected statement towards the end of the dynastic section reads that a king of Magadha, having overthrown the *kṣatriya* caste, will create another *kṣatriya* caste,[91] thus conceding that although the traditionally accepted *kṣatriyas* had declined, it was still possible for there to be new *kṣatriyas*: a statement which has interesting consequences, for the future form of the *itihāsa-purāṇa* tradition. Implicit in this statement is the fact that since the dynastic section repeatedly uses the word *nṛpaḥ* rather than *kṣatriya*, any claim to being a *kṣatriya* would have to seek links with the Solar or Lunar descent groups. What is of further interest is that the other *varṇas* listed as being converted to *kṣatriya* status through this new caste are the Kaivarta, Pañcaka and Pulinda, otherwise ranked as low castes. The Pulindas are generally viewed as tribal people outside the pale of caste society. The Brahmanical imprint on this section is apparent. As a projection of the decline of an earlier aristocracy and the moving in of upstarts, no statement could be more explicit.

This also raises the question of what the term *kṣatriya* was meant to convey. The earlier function of the *kṣatriya* had been that of the heroic ideal—the warrior, the leader into victory, the successful cattle raider, the clan chief and eventually the king. Were those dynasties which are listed as non-*kṣatriya* so described because some were patrons of non-brahmanical religious sects, such as the Mauryan kings? Or should this be read as a statement that monarchies as constituted in this early period were initially disapproved of as political forms by the *brāhmaṇa* authors, who preferred the earlier clan system where the chiefs were dependent on the *brāhmaṇas*? The return to claims to being *kṣatriya* in the post-Gupta period was again a situation of royalty seeking support from *brāhmaṇas* for legitimation. Alternatively, was the term as applied to earlier *rājās* used in the sense of an office or designation rather than as a caste, since some of them were of an ambiguous caste status anyway. The use of *kṣatriya* in later periods appears to have become more closely a caste usage. There is therefore not only a flexibility in the use of the term *kṣatriya*, but possibly also a change of meaning. Disapproval of monarchical states because they encouraged a competition among *brāhmaṇas* and other sects for patronage may partially explain why there is no elaboration on the dynasties in Brahmanical literature generally. Even dynasties of *brāhmaṇa* origin such as the Śuṅga royal family, although they feature in the plays of Kālidāsa (probably contemporary with the early *Purāṇas*) are nevertheless not treated at length in brahmanical sources. It is unlikely that the disapproval of *brāhmaṇas* becoming kings would have stood in the way of such descriptions.

XI

The construction of this genealogical succession may well have been an amalgamation of traditions. The possibility of there having been a distinct *kṣatriya* tradition has been debated.[92] This would not be altogether surprising given the existence of caste *Purāṇas* in many sections of Indian society seeking to provide a history and a status for the caste. Without going over the old debate again,[93] it does seem possible that similar to the succession lists of teachers maintained by *brāhmaṇas*, some *kṣatriya* succession lists were maintained by bards, such as those in the epics. These may well have been taken over by *brāhmaṇa* authors and reconstituted, together with other material into the *vaṃśānucarita* section.

The importance of these activities was recognised by *brāhmaṇa* authors hence the references to *itihāsa* and *purāṇa* in Vedic and other texts. But the fact of controlling the tradition was a later development. The *sūta* and the *māgadha* seemed to have been closely tied to the Vrātyas who were never quite acceptable to the *brāhmaṇas*, even after the performance of the *vrātyastoma* sacrificial ritual. However, one category of *brāhmaṇas* which might in a sense have bridged the differences was the category of Bhṛgu or Bhārgava *brāhmaṇas*. Their role is central not only to the redaction of the epics but also in the writing of texts which were regarded as part of the *itihāsa-purāṇa* tradition. The *Purāṇas* can perhaps be seen as an attempt to appropriate some of the legitimacy of Vedic Brahmanism but at the same time drawing on an equally strong tradition emanating from non-brahmanical sources. Thus, the history of those claiming political power being embedded in the form of a *vaṃśa* in texts on cosmology and sectarian ritual, was in a sense, a continuation of the Vedic tradition of embedding the eulogies on the heroes—the *dāna-stutis*—in ritual texts. The latter provided a legitimacy to both categories of data.

There was the added parallel that dynasties patronizing these sects could be projected in a more favourable light in the construction of dynastic succession, such as the Guptas, whereas those who were not patrons of these sects were described in unflattering terms. The inclusion of succession lists relating to political authority in sectarian texts was a common practice wherever the sect had some links with rulers. It is also worth keeping in mind that the perception of society was not in terms of a universalizing whole, but in terms of sects and castes. Initially the record of the *vaṃśa* or succession would have been orally maintained, hence the possibility of restructuring it at some point. When compiled as texts, then the Brahmanical world-view would have entered.

The *brāhmaṇas* most closely associated with the *itihāsa-purāṇa* tradition over time, were the Bhṛgu *brāhmaṇas*. They are linked with the fire cult and hostile to the hero-god Indra and are therefore treated as something of a category apart in the early texts.[94] Gradually they join with the Aṅgirasas and the compound term Bhṛgu-aṅgirasa comes into use.[95] The connection with *yatis* and with *yātu-dhānas* suggests sorcery and magicians or at any rate a group that is somewhat feared.[96] But the *yatis* seem also to have had an earlier association with asceticism. The compilation of the *Atharvaveda* is attributed to the Bhṛgu-aṅgirasa. There is also a link with the Vrātyas where the Bhṛgu-aṅgirasas are said to praise the *ekavrātya*. Sometimes the *itihāsa-purāṇa* as well as the Vedic hero-lauds, the *gāthās* and *nārāśāṃsīs* are all linked to the Vrātyas.[97] This is rather surprising as generally the Vrātyas are regarded as being somewhat deficient in their handling of the Sanskrit language. Did they represent a non-Vedic and possibly a pre-Vedic tradition? This would be significant, particularly if they may have had their origins among priests of lower social groups. The Bhṛgus are recognised as powerful *brāhmaṇas* but their marriages into *kṣatriya* families and some of their activities which deviate from brahmanical norms, sets them apart from other *brāhmaṇas*. The Aṅgirasas are linked to the homeland of the Vrātyas as of the *sūta* and *māgadha* and are also associated with the *itihāsa-purāṇa*. If they were inducted into the *brāhmaṇa* caste then they may have been responsible for bringing the *itihāsa* tradition with them.

It has been argued that certain priest groups among the *dāsas* or existing peoples were adopted by the incoming Indo-Aryan speakers and these groups took on the patriarchal clan groupings from the *kṣatriyas* for whom they officiated. Among such groups were the Bhṛgu-aṅgirasa. The latter were frequently exempted from the usual rules of marriage, hence their alliances with *kṣatriya* women. They are not mentioned along with the seven *ṛṣis* and therefore are not technically *gotras* or exogamous groups.[98] The Bhṛgus are associated with the fire-cult of Agni. That they may have had a pre-Vedic ancestry is suggested by their links with the *yati* or magicians and sorcerers[99] and with the notion of *māyā* or magic. Their eminence is based on their ancestral claim to be the mind-born sons of Brahmā and Manu and who learnt the codes of social and sacred duty from Manu.[100] The Aṅgirasa are linked to the *Atharvaveda*[101] and may well have been shamans originally associated with sorcery and healing and were seemingly semi-mythical. The title Ahgirasa was taken by many *ṛṣis*. That they were powerful is apparent from the *Atharvaveda* which states that when opposed by the *kṣatriyas*, they ruined the latter.[102] The *Māhabhārata* and the Purāṇic tradition claims that they were among the earliest *brāhmaṇas* and that the Bhṛgus were the priests to the *asuras*, i.e., those who were once powerful and friendly but gradually came to be viewed as hostile.[103] The succession list of the Bhṛgus is given in the earliest *Purāṇas*.[104] Among the more respected Bhṛgus, Uśanas Śakra is associated with those opposed to the *āryas* and only later does he ally himself with them.

The Bhṛgus are associated with death, violence, sorcery, confusion, *varṇasaṃkara* or the mixing of castes and the violation of the *varṇāśramadharma*, the ordering of society.[105] Their relations with the *kṣatriyas* although close, were ambivalent. In some cases they are hostile to the *kṣatriyas* as in their attack on the Haihaya clans or in the story of Paraśurāma the *brāhmaṇa* who exterminated all the *kṣatriyas*. In other cases they intermarry with the *kṣatriyas* and take *kṣatriya* wives. This makes them degraded *brāhmaṇasbrāhmaṇāpasada*.[106] They are also proficient in *dhanurveda*, the science of archery, which is again contrary to the social code since this is the professional expertise of the *kṣatriyas*. They are the great propagators of Viṣṇu as is evident from their redactions of the *Mahābhārata* and the *Rāmāyaṇa*, but at the same time claim to be greater than Viṣṇu in that it is held that Viṣṇu has to be incarnated seven times because of the curse of a Bhṛgu. Interestingly, Paraśurāma finally becomes an *avatāra* of Viṣṇu. The extermination of *kṣatriyas* by Paraśurāma is said to have been repeated twenty-one times. But clearly even then some escaped. The myth revolves around the issue of power and draws not only on the enmity with the Haihayas, a segment of the Yādava descent group, but expands it in the story of Viśvāmitra and Vasiṣṭha.[107] There is a reversal of roles in the activities of Paraśurāma and Viśvāmitra where the *kṣatriya* Viśvāmitra aspires to the powers of the ascetic and the *brāhmaṇa* Vasiṣṭha takes on the role of the warrior. (This is explained by the story of the mixing up of the *carus* or special food, consumed by their respective mothers). Possibly the *brāhmaṇa-kṣatriya* hostility reflects two traditions each trying to edge the other out and the myth of extermination is meant to state, as it has been suggested, that the Bhṛgus finally appropriated the *kṣatriya* tradition.[108]

The more interesting question is why the *brāhmaṇas* eventually took over this tradition. This may not have been unconnected with literacy. Literacy and the transmission of the *Purāṇas* in a literate form, made them into texts for reference. They could be recited on ritual occasions, or even as an act of acquiring merit. A more developed historical sensibility required written records. The initial records tend to be texts based on an oral tradition. Writing introduces changes in the transmission of items believed to be significant to a culture. However, the form which writing takes and the degree to which it is diffused in society would influence historical sensibility. Further, although an account can be changed, nevertheless the change is less radical in a written than in an oral form.[109]

The historical tradition becomes an instrument of control over society, is maintained by a specific category of people whose power derives from their ability to provide those in authority with an identity. A historical tradition, therefore, establishes group consciousness. As a record of the past, transmitting the past in an oral or a literate form, the historian is an informant. Gradually, however, as his control over the past increases, he acquires a patron, and takes on the role of the performer as well.

XII

The genealogical material could be used to identify groups and provide them with historical antecedents. It could relate traditions about origins and bridge gaps in traditions or separate or amalgamate them. Added to this was some chronological speculation. But above all, the genealogies were crucial to political functions and to legitimize office-holders.[110] Genealogy was the king's legal title to rule and it could include in its patterning, alliances and overlordships. The perception of the past is expressed in the association of places of origin, of links with lineages and the generations accounted for. Newcomers are grafted on or segments detached. The genealogy therefore becomes a useful historical tool. This necessitates that those who keep the genealogical tradition are aware of their closeness to political power.[111]

The reconstruction of the past takes a form very different from that of the nineteenth century interpretation of the earliest Indian past. There is in these texts little which can be construed as an Aryan invasion or even a racial difference between Aryan and non-Aryan. The perception is that of many societies with strong social, linguistic and ritual differentiation, with a variety of mores which seems to have had particular and multiple segmented identities, and did not conform to two confrontational systems. There are many internal dislocations occasioned by these differences. Even the veneer of a certain Brahmanical uniformity remains an attempt fostered by the Brahmanical perspective, but obviously not adhered to by others. The unifying factors are language and the acceptance of a *varṇa* society.

In the composition of the *vaṃśānucarita* of the early *Purāṇas*, an attempt was made to reconstruct a past, constituted for a purpose. Was this perhaps to establish a Brahmanical version of the past, distinct from that put together in other traditions? The oral tradition of the bards was incorporated in this version. Yet the bards were not banished at this point for it is the bard who is said to be foretelling the narrative of dynasties. Nevertheless the perspective neither endorses the bardic view nor that, for instance, of the Buddhists. Thus, the lineage of the Buddha is briefly incorporated towards the end of the Sūryavaṃśa, mentioning Śākyamuni, Śuddhodhana, Siddhartha and Rāhula. Was this an attempt to subordinate the descent of the Buddha by incorporating it into the line of Rāma but with no comment? Buddhist texts do maintain that the Śākya clan to which the Buddha belonged had descended from Ikṣvāku, but no reference is made to any link with Rāma as an ancestor. The Ceylon Chronicles written in the mid-first millennium AD as a Buddhist history of Sri Lanka and the Mahāvihāra monastery, had much to say on some of the dynasties, as for example, the Nandas and Mauryas because of their links with both the Buddhist Order (the Saṅgha) and with Sri Lanka, but this information is ignored in the *Purāṇas*. Whereas we are told that Kauṭilya will anoint Candragupta, the founder of the Mauryan dynasty, the king Aśoka remains a mere name in a king-list. The *kṣatriya* status of the Mauryas as asserted in Buddhist sources is contradicted in the *Purāṇas*. Nor is there any attempt to incorporate the information on these dynasties given in their inscriptions. Inscriptions were official statements and the authors of the *Purāṇas* maintained their distance from these.

One of the purposes of constructing a view of the past arose from the recognition that religious authority would be considerably enhanced by association with political power and one of the strengths of such an association lay in controlling the construction of the past. This might in part have been the influence of the Buddhist Chronicles and Jaina texts where the association of kings with the Buddhist Councils and the *saṅgha* appears advantageous to the latter. The taking over of the tradition by the *brāhmaṇas*, was not merely an attempt at legitimizing the earlier descent groups and dynasties but the construction of the past was perceived as important to contemporary politics. The genealogical section received attention and was structured to facilitate the claims to legitimacy by a variety of ruling families. The universalizing of the genealogy would be appropriate to historical change, hence the attempt to give it a textual form. This also ensured it a wider audience than when it was part of an oral bardic tradition. The ideological location of this construction was in the texts of the new Purāṇic religion, particularly of Vaiṣṇavism, also the recipients of royal patronage. This was not only a counterpoint to Buddhism in a period when Buddhism was gradually declining and Vaiṣṇavism was making a bid to take over its role, but it also encouraged the notion of the interface of political power with religious authority.

If situations of tension and confrontation increase sensitivity to historical perceptions, then this would be expected in the mid-first millennium AD. Vedic sacrificial rituals which had earlier been used for legitimizing *rājās* had begun to decline. This was partly due to the popularity of non-Vedic religions such as Buddhism and Jainism and the oligarchic roots of some kingdoms. This change also required the substitution of some other form of legitimation in cases where rulers were not followers of the heterodox sects. Genealogies appear to have provided the answer. These genealogies become part of a historical tradition because they encapsulate the description of processes of change over time. They were relating a historical process in a form which had legitimacy and was an accepted norm of that period. The historical processes to which they point can be reconstructed from other sources.

In the competition between Buddhism and the newly emerged Bhagavata religion, focusing on the worship of Viṣṇu, the Gupta dynasty as supporters of the latter would have been regarded as appropriate patrons by the *brāhmaṇas* who supported the Bhāgavata religion, such as the Bhṛgu-aṅgirasa. These would then try and construct a past in which there would be a claim to historicity, even if not factually historical, and that this claim took the form of genealogy as a historical narrative. Genealogies therefore become important at a particular point in time because they legitimize power and authority and are closely linked with royal patronage. The social significance of genealogies is demonstrated by the fact that they occur in more than one *Purāṇa*.

Genealogy was the epicentre as it were, of *itihāsa* in the *Purāṇas* and it remained so in many texts of claims to status. It was not arbitrary but embedded in a perspective of the past and, at the same time, was necessary to functions of the present. This is particularly noticeable in the official records of dynasties, namely, the inscriptions in which claims to status are made. Seals of members of ruling families from the fifth century AD onwards, such as that of the Guptas and of Harṣavardhana, carry genealogies.[112] There is a vast spread of families of landowning chiefs and dynasties who, throughout early Indian history, have claimed to belong to the Yadu lineage. This stretches from a ruling family of Uttarakāśi in the

Himalayan foothills[113] to the multiple families of the *vels* in Tamil Nadu[114] and to ruling houses in eastern and western India.[115] Lengthy inscriptions from various parts of India carry genealogies and some echo the formula of the *vaṃśānucarita* section. The Pallavas ruling in the seventh century in south India draw on lineage ties in their origin myths. The earlier inscriptions do not refer to their origins, but the later grants in Sanskrit introduce their ancestors.[116] The Pāṇḍyas trace their lineage to the Candravaṃśa.[117] In one inscription it is said that at the time of the Flood, Brahmā appealed to Pāṇḍya to save the world, and Pāṇḍya was therefore born as Budha the son of Soma in the line of Iḷā. The Colas at the end of the first millennium AD claimed descent from the Sūryavaṃśa and this claim was made in the reign of Vijayālaya and of Aditya I who, in one inscription are said to have been preceded by fifteen rulers.[118] Another inscription increases the list to forty-four and, yet another, to fifty-two, where the earlier names draw heavily on Purāṇic lists.[119] The lists do not tally in details but some names are common. The Cedis in central India, claiming association with the Haihayas, describe themselves as of the Lunar line.[120] Dynasties in central India also claim links with the Sūryavaṃśa or the Solar line. Genealogies therefore become agencies of mobilization for lesser families or those of obscure origin. The *vaṃśānucarita* section becomes a political charter for future claims.

As a construction of the past this section of the *Purāṇas* encapsulated a consciousness of history and was used both as such and elaborated upon in the subsequent period. The forms however changed from the bare bones of a genealogical skeleton to the far fuller forms of biographies and chronicles.

Notes and References

* Published in *Studies in History*, 7, 1, n.s., New Delhi, 1991, 1–36. Copyright © 1991 Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi. All rights reserved. Reproduced with the permission of the copyright holders and the publishers, SAGE Publications India Pvt. Ltd, New Delhi.

1. J. Vansina, *Oral Tradition as History*, London, 1985; D.P. Henige, *The Chronology of Oral Tradition*, Oxford, 1974.
2. J. Goody and I. Watt, 'The Consequences of Literacy', *CSSH*, 5, 1963, pp. 304–45.
3. M. Fortes, 'The Structure of Unilineal Descent Groups', *American Anthropologist*, 55, 1953, pp. 17–41.

4. V. Kennedy, *Affinity of Ancient and Hindu Mythology*, London, 1831, p. 130.
5. V. Smith, 'Andhra History and Coinage', *ZDMG*, 1902, 56, pp. 649–75; *The Early History of India*, Oxford, 1924, pp. 11–12. H.C. Raychaudhuri, *Political History of Ancient India*, Calcutta, 1923, used the Purāṇic lists for reconstructing early history, particularly dynastic history. For a sceptical view of history in these sources see D.D. Kosambi, *Ancient India: A History of Its Culture and Civilisation*, New York, 1969, p. 174.
6. U.N. Ghoshal, *Studies in Indian History and Culture*, Bombay, 1965, pp. 37–52.
7. *Dates and Dynasties in Earliest India*, Delhi, 1973.
8. Arrian, *Indica*, 9.9. Solinus 52.5.
9. *Hist. Nat.*, 6.21, pp. 4–5.
10. A.B.L. Awasthi, *History from the Purāṇas*, Lucknow, 1975, maintains that there are references to post-Gupta history in some *Purāṇas*, but these analyses are not very convincing.
11. R.C. Hazra, *Studies on the Purāṇic Record of Hindu Rites and Customs*, Dacca, 1940; *Studies in the Upa-Puranas*, Calcutta, 1958; L. Rocher, *The Puranas*, Weisbaden, 1986, pp. 115–32.
12. *Bhāgvata Purāṇa*, 2.10, 1ff (trans G.V. Tagare, Delhi, 1976).
13. *Matsya Purāṇa*, Anandasrama Sanskrit Series, 1907; V.S. Agrawala, *Matsya Purāṇa: A Study*, Varanasi, 1963; S.G. Kantawala, *Cultural History from the Matsya Purāṇa*, Baroda, 1964. *Vāyu Purāṇa*, R. Mitra (ed.), Bombay, 1988; V.R.R. Dikshitar, *Some Aspects of the Vāyu Purāṇa*, Madras, 1933; D.R. Patil, *Cultural History from Vāyu Purāṇa*, Poona, 1946. *Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa*, Venketesvara Press, Bombay, 1963. *Viṣṇu Purāṇa*, Venketesvara Press, 1967.
14. *Vāyu Purāṇa*, I, pp. 54–5.
15. *Viṣṇu Purāṇa*, 3.6.15ff.
16. P. Horsch, *Die Vedische Gāthā und Śloka Literateur*, Bern, 1966, pp. 12–13.
17. For references see Rocher, *The Puranas*, 14ff.
18. 3.185.1ff. Rocher, *The Puranas*, 96ff.
19. A.S. Gupta, 'Purana, Itihasa and Akhyana', *Purāṇa*, 1964, VI.2.451ff. *Viṣṇu Purāṇa*, 3.6.15.
20. V. Smith, 'Andhra History and Coinage', 11ff.
21. *Vāyu Purāṇa*, 1.203; *Matsya Purāṇa*, 53.63.
22. R.C. Hazra, *Studies on the Purāṇic Record of Hindu Rites*, p. 18.
23. *Viṣṇu Purāṇa*, Bombay, 1910. H.H. Wilson (tr.), *The Viṣṇu Purāṇa*, reprint with Introduction by R.C. Hazra, Calcutta, 1961. V.R.R. Dikshitar, 'The Age of Viṣṇu Purāṇa', *IHC*, 1950, 13, pp. 46–50.
24. *Viṣṇu Purāṇa*, 1.
25. *Viṣṇu Purāṇa*, 1.6.
26. *Viṣṇu Purāṇa*, 1.13.
27. *Viṣṇu Purāṇa*, 1, pp. 14–20. I.13

28. *Viṣṇu Purāṇa*, 1, pp. 7–15. I.7
29. *Viṣṇu Purāṇa*, II.2.
30. Rocher, *The Puranas*, pp. 130–1.
31. D.C. Sircar, *Studies in the Geography of Ancient and Medieval India*, Delhi, 1971 (reprint). M.R. Singh, *Geographical Data in the Early Puranas*, Calcutta, 1972.
32. *Viṣṇu Purāṇa*, 3, pp. 1–2.
33. J.E. Mitchiner, 'The Evolution of the Manvantara Theory as Illustrated by the Saptaṛṣi Manvantara Traditions', *Purāṇa*, 1978, 20.1, pp. 7–37.
34. *Viṣṇu Purāṇa*, 3.6.15ff. *Vāyu Purāṇa*, 1.28–9; 61.55; 103, pp. 58–66. *Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa*, 2.35.63ff. V.S. Agrawala, 'Original Purāṇa Samhita', *Purāṇa*, 1966, 8, 2, pp. 232–45. The caste status of Vyās remains somewhat ambiguous. Although he is universally accorded *brāhmaṇa* status, nevertheless his mother was of low caste, being the daughter of a fisherman.
35. In this connection see G. Bonazzoli, 'Puranic Parampara', *Purāṇa*, 22, 1, 1980, pp. 33–60.
36. G. Bonazzoli, 'Places of Purāṇic Recitation according to the Puranas', *Purāṇa*, 23, 1, 1981, pp. 48–60. The most popular place was the Naimiṣa forest whose location remains uncertain.
37. S.G. Kantawala, 'Home of the Matsyapurana', *Purāṇa*, 3, 1, 1961, pp. 115–19.
38. F.E. Pargiter, *The Purana Texts of the Dynasties of the Kali Age*, Oxford, 1913; for a discussion on the subject, see A.D. Pusalkar, *Studies in the Epics and the Puranas*, Bombay, 1955.
39. G. Bonazzoli, 'Composition, Transmission and Recitation of the Puranas', *Purāṇa*, 25, 2, 1983, pp. 254–80.
40. *Pañcavimsa Brāhmaṇa*, 1.9.1, p. 4; *Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa*, 1.7.3.1.
41. *Atharva Veda*, 3.5.7; *Taittirīya Samhitā*, 4.5.2, *namo-sūtaya-ahantaya*.
42. Rocher, *The Puranas*, 49ff. He is said to have been addressed as *medhavin*, *vaṃśakuśala*, *Kalpajña*, and *mahābhāga*.
43. *Bhāgvata Purāṇa*, 1.18.18.
44. Manu, *Dharmaśāstra*, 10.11, 17, 47; *Arthaśāstra*, 2.30.42; 3.7.29.
45. *Arthaśāstra*, III.7.27–9.
46. Pāṇini, 3.1.146–7.
47. *Arthaśāstra*, 3.13.30; 2.27.6. The rather uncomplimentary associations were probably because the author of the text treated all professions which were itinerant as suspicious.
48. *Vāyu, Purāṇa*, 42, pp. 137–48; *Padma*, II.27.
49. The *Mahābhārata* uses the epithet, *vrātyam sūtam*, Anuśāsana Parva, 48.10.
50. See the attached chart for an outline of the genealogical pattern.
51. *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*, 1.8.1, pp. 1–10; *Mahābhārata*, 3.185; *Matsya Purāṇa*, 1.10–33.
52. J.C. Heesterman, 'The Flood Story in Vedic Ritual', in *The Inner Conflict of Tradition*, Chicago, 1985, 59ff.

53. Heesterman, 'The Flood Story in Vedic Ritual'.
54. W.G. Lambert and A.R. Millard, *Atra-hasis*, Oxford, 1969.
55. Berossus, *The Babyloniaca of Berossus*, S.M. Burstein (ed. and trs.), Malibu, 1978, pp. 19–21.
56. M. Eliade, *Cosmos and History*, New York, 1959.
57. *Rāmāyaṇa*, 1, 70–1.
58. This is said to be common in patrilineal polygynous societies. (Personal communication from S.C. Humphreys.)
59. Yayāti's five sons—Yadu, Anu, Turvaśa, Druhyu and Pūru—appear almost at the start of the descent list. Towards the end of the list come the five Pāṇḍavas—Yudhisthira, Bhīma, Arjuna, Nakula and Sahadeva.
60. *Viṣṇu Purāṇa*, 4.20.
61. *Viṣṇu Purāṇa*, 4.18.13.
62. *Viṣṇu Purāṇa*, 2, 3.15.
63. Henige, *The Chronology of Oral Tradition*, 40ff.
64. T. Trautmann, *Dravidian Kinship*, Cambridge, 1981, 238ff.
65. K. Gough, *Matrilineal Kinship*, Berkeley, 1961.
66. Pargiter, *Ancient Indian Historical Tradition*, p. 89.
67. *Viṣṇu Purāṇa*, 4.16.1ff; 4.19.1ff.
68. R. Thapar, 'Puranic Lineages and Archaeological Cultures', in *Ancient Indian Social History: Some Interpretations*, New Delhi, 1978, pp. 240–67.
69. For a general discussion of this picture see R. Thapar, *From Lineage to State*, Delhi, 1984.
70. *Viṣṇu Purāṇa*, 4.21.1; 4.24.8.
71. *Viṣṇu Purāṇa*, 5.1–2.

    nṛpāṇām kathitassarvo bhavatā vaṃśavistaraḥ
    vaṃśānucaritam caiva yathāvadanuvarṇitam.

72. *Bhṛtya*, from the root *bhṛ*, to bear or to carry, means being dependent on, or a servant of, and refers to one who is to be maintained or nourished.
73. *Ep. Ind.*, 8, pp. 59, 86 (ASI, New Delhi), E.J. Rapson (ed.), *The Cambridge History of India*, 1, Ancient India, Cambridge, 1935, p. 577.
74. H.H. Wilson, *The Vishnu Purana*, London, 1840; F.E. Pargiter, *Ancient Indian Historical Tradition*, London, 1922; *Purāṇic Texts of the Dynasties of the Kali Age*, London, 1913.
75. *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*, 6.8.1.14.
76. *Mahābhārata*, 7.118, pp. 14–15; Baudhāyana, *Dharmasūtra*, 1.1.2.13.
77. S.N. Pradhan, *Chronology of Ancient India*, Calcutta, 1927; P.L. Bhargava, *India in the Vedic Age*, Lucknow, 1956; A.D. Pusalkar, *Vedic Age*, Bombay, 1952, *Studies in the Epics and Puranas*, Bombay, 1958; R. Morton–Smith, *Dates and Dynasties in Early India*, Delhi, 1973.

78. T. Trautmann, 'Length of Generation and Reign in Ancient India', *JAOS*, 89, 3, 1969, pp. 564–77; A.L. Basham, *Studies in Indian History and Culture*, Calcutta, 1964.
79. Aihole Inscription, *Ep. Ind.*, 6.1ff.
80. D.H. Jones, 'Problems of African Chronology', *Journal of African History*, 11, 1970, pp. 161–76.
81. Henige, *The Chronology of Oral Tradition*, p. 120.
82. C.D. Church, 'The Myth of the Four Yugas in the Sanskrit Puranas', *Purāṇa*, 16, 1, 1974, pp. 5–25.
83. M. Biardeau, 'Etude de mythologique hindoue', *BEFEO*, 54, 1968, pp. 19–45.
84. D. Pingree, 'The Purāṇas and Jyotihśāstra Astronomy', *JAOS*, 110, 2, 1990, pp. 274–80.
85. Pingree, 'The Purāṇas and Jyotihśāstra Astronomy'.
86. M. Eliade, *Cosmos and History*, p. 117.
87. *Viṣṇu Purāṇa*, 1.3.1–25; *Vāyu Purāṇa*, 8.18–63; *Matsya Purāṇa*, 142–4.
88. P.V. Kane, *History of Dharmasastra*, Poona, 1947, *et. sq.*
89. The Laukika era was particularly common in Kashmir and Punjab and was also used in Rajasthan towards the end of the first millennium AD.
90. S.B. Das Gupta, *Obscure Religious Cults*, Calcutta, 1946, 235ff.
91. Pargiter, *Dynasties of the Kali Age* ..., 53, *utsādayitvā kṣatram tu kṣatram anyat kariṣyati.*
92. Pargiter, 'Ancient Indian Genealogies and Chronology', *JRAS*, 1910, pp. 1–56.
93. Rocher, *The Puranas*, pp. 125–9.
94. *Vedic Index*, II, p. 109. Varanasi, 1967 (reprint).
95. R.P. Goldman, *Gods, Priests and Warriors*, Columbia, 1977, p. 146.
96. *Ṛgveda*, 8.3.9; 8.6.18; 10.72.7; *Atharvaveda*, 20.9.3; 20.49.6.
97. *Atharvaveda*, 15.6.4.
98. J. Brough, '*The Early Brahman System of Gotra and Pravara*', Cambridge, 1953, xv, pp. 4–29.
99. *Vedic Index*, II, p. 109.
100. Manu, *Dharmaśāstra*, 1, 35; 1, 59; 5, 3; 12, 2.
101. *Vedic Index*, I, 11.
102. 5.19.2.
103. Pargiter, *Ancient Indian Historical Tradition*, 186ff.
104. *Vāyu Purāṇa*, 65, pp. 72–96; *Brahmāṇḍa*, 3.1, pp. 73–100; *Matsya Purāṇa*, 195, 11–46.
105. Goldman, *Gods, Priests and Warriors*, Columbia, 1977.
106. Goldman, *Gods, Priests and Warriors*, p. 98.
107. *Mahābhārata*, 1.164ff.
108. Goldman, *Gods, Priests and Warriors*.

109. Goody and Watt, 'The Consequences of Literacy'. Comparative Studies in Society and history, 1963, pp. 5, 3, 304–45.
110. M.D. Johnson, *The Purpose of Biblical Genealogies*, Cambridge, 1969, pp. 77–82.
111. D. Dumville, 'Kingship, Genealogies and Regnal Lists', in P.H. Sawyer and I.N. Woods (eds), *Early Medieval Kingship*, Leeds, 1977, pp. 72–104.
112. Bhitari Stone Pillar Inscription of Skandagupta, *CII*, III (revised), 312ff; Nalanda Clay Seals of Budhagupta, Narasiṁhagupta and Kumāragupta, III, *CII*, pp. 350–5; Bhitari Copper-silver Seal of Kumāragupta, III, *CII*, 358ff. Sonpat Copper Seal inscription of Harṣavardhana, *CII*, 231. The seal inscriptions are close to the minimal genealogical style, obviously for reasons of space.
113. Lakkhamandala Insc, *Ep. Ind.*, l.loff.
114. R. Chamapakalakshmi, 'Archaeology and the Tamil Tradition', *Puratattva*, 8, 1975–6, pp. 110–22.
115. Belava Copper-plate of Bhojavarmadeva, *Ep. Ind.*, 12, 39ff; Komarti Plates of Candravarman, lord of Kalinga, *Ep. Ind.*, 4, pp. 142ff, see also pp. 145ff; the inscription of the son of Bhaṭṭārka, king of Valabhi, *Indian Antiquary*, 10, 283ff. The last of these has been described as a spurious inscription but the claim to *kṣatriya* status is the point at issue.
116. *South Indian Inscriptions*, 2, no. 98, ASI, Madras, 1890.
117. T.N. Subramaniam (ed.), *The Pandya Copper-plates*, Tamil History Academy, Madras, 1961.
118. Anbil Plates of Sundara Chola, *Ep. Ind.*, 15, 44ff.
119. Kanyakumari Inscription of Vīrarājendra–Deva, *Ep. Ind.*, 18, 21ff.
120. Ratanpur Stone Inscription of Jajalladeva I, *CII*, IV, 2, 409ff, Ootacammund, 1955.

8

*Origin Myths and the Early Indian Historical Tradition**

The organization of a historical tradition revolves around two related components—the purpose of action and the agency of action. Both of these are implicitly present irrespective of the form which the tradition may take, whether it is expressed as a myth or as an historical narrative. These components are by no means of equal importance but an element at least of each resides in all historical traditions. By the purpose of action is meant that the recording of what is believed to be history has an aim, either to moralize, as was often the case with traditional historical writing, or else to explain why and how past events happened, as is frequently the case with modern historiography. The agency of action is ultimately human (even if sometimes claimed to be divinely inspired); but it is of interest to discover which group of men are regarded as the actors in history and to what extent they function independently of any other agency, as for example, the gods.

Past events have to be related in a chronological order but the time sequence can be part of a much larger concept of time. Events concerning the more remote periods often take the form of a myth. Myth is in a sense a prototype history since it is a selection of ideas composed in narrative form for the purpose of preserving and giving significance to an important aspect of the past. Although myths cannot be used as descriptive sources on the past, their analysis can reveal the more emphatic assumptions of a society. Myths record what a people like to think about their past and to that extent even some modern histories are not always free of an element of myth-making.

Mythos is defined as an 'utterance', often a tale recited in association with a religious ceremony. In that sense the narratives of the Puranic tradition were myths, since the *ākhyāna* was recited on ritual occasions and the *purāṇa* is explained as relating to an ancient lore which would tend to be preserved in mythical form. The myth involved archetypal or elemental characters, themes and symbols. It may be differentiated from the folk-tale by its focus on the 'grand events' of the past—the creation of the world, the origin of man and of the gods, the justification of kingship—whereas the folk-tale is concerned with more restricted social pre-occupations generally not involving any grand designs.

The interpretation of myths has resulted in diverse explanations.[1] Early interpreters saw in them symbols of natural phenomena and most myths were nature myths.[2] Others tried to see them as attempts at explaining the real world but couched in symbolic form.[3] Another view held that myths had an intrinsic relationship with ritual and could only be explained in terms of ritual origins, a view which conjured up the world of Frazer's *Golden Bough*.[4] A major re-orientation came about with Malinowski's view that myths were essentially charters of validation in which the aim was very often to provide a sanction for current situations.[5] This analysis encouraged an interest in the social underpinnings of myth. The notion of myth as charter was reconsidered later when the emphasis shifted to the structural study of myth and the relation of this to the structural study of society.[6] The notion of myth as an archetype and as a primary cultural force has also remained a dominant trend.[7] Partially associated with this is the theory of Mircea Eliade that myths reflect a nostalgia for the origins of human society and try to evoke a return to a creative era.[8] More recently it has been suggested that myths are connected with liminality and arise in transitional situations, thus explaining how one state of affairs became another, or how things came to be what they are.[9] Specific to Indo-European mythology have been the attempts of Georges Dumezil to analyse these myths on the basis of the 'tripartite ideology', a pattern which even for Vedic myths is not always beyond question.[10]

This brief survey of the possible range of paradigms which can provide interpretations of myths is not an attempt to establish any priorities of interpretation. It is provided only to emphasize that in choosing to limit this study to origin myths, and that too in the context of the *itihāsa-purāṇa* and related historical tradition, there will implicitly be a delimiting of the range of interpretation.

Myth is at one level a straightforward story, a narrative; at another level it reflects the integrating values around which societies are organized.[11] It codifies belief, safeguards morality, vouches for the efficiency of the ritual and provides social norms. It is a rationalization of man's activity in the past although the expression may take on non-rational forms. It remains socially important as long as it is a charter of belief, but becomes ineffective when seen as a myth. As a charter of belief it serves to protect cultural continuity and provides through its theme a point of cultural equilibrium. In a historical tradition therefore the themes of myths act as factors of continuity.

The analysis of the structure of a myth can reveal (to a lesser or greater extent) the structure of the society from which it emanates. The analysis may centre on one of two perspectives: either the sequence and the order of events or the schemata and organization of the sequences at different levels. Ultimately the myth is concerned with the quest for understanding the significance of nature and culture. The action of the myth is usually the narration of sacred history which is believed to be a true event which has taken place in the past. Since these primordial events are often associated with supernatural beings they also tend to take on the character of models for action and for ritual. Most myths being explanatory (whether explicitly stated as such or not) they are related to the origin or the commencement of a particular event or action. Myths made the past intelligible and meaningful, but it was intelligibility and meaningfulness which related to the present, for the continuity of myth is largely with reference to the present.

In societies (and this would include most pre-modern societies) where the oral tradition rather than the use of literature is the more functional means of communication on a large scale, myths become one of the means of passing on information. There is therefore a process of constant adjustment, and myths from earlier periods are recast in conformity with the social assumptions of later periods. The repetition of the same myth, with perhaps some modifications, from age to age is partly to ensure 'the message' getting through and partly to indicate new nuances. Myths therefore have a widely over-arching relationship to all aspects of society and each major myth could be the subject of an expansive analysis. The attempt here is not to provide a complete analysis of each myth selected for discussion but to recognize and point up the historically significant aspects of certain myths, i.e., those aspects which had some role in the propagation and continuity of the *itihāsa-purāṇa* tradition and its main concerns. But this is not to deny that even within those aspects there may well be other layers touching on different facets of early Indian society. Further, the attempt is not to ascertain the historical authenticity of the myth but rather to probe the reason for its acceptance in as much as it relates to social validation. As validating charters, myths have a close connection with social organization, not only representing, as they do, the assumptions about the past but also under-pinning the social relationships of the present.

The myths which are the most closely related to the *itihāsa-purāṇa* tradition are available in the core of the tradition, that is, the genealogical sections, *vamśānucarita*, of the major *Purāṇas*. A variant of these may be seen from the somewhat different perspective of the Buddhist historical tradition, the sources for which have to be culled from various texts. These will form our primary sources. In both cases the earliest occasion for the recital of these myths would be in association with rituals and ceremonies. The *Purāṇas* were recited over a period of many days in connection with a religious ceremony. The genealogical sections in particular were preserved by the *sūta* and the *māgadha*, the professional bards and chroniclers, who recited them in association with the epics and the heroic ballads at royal courts. In the Buddhist case too the literature would initially be preserved as part of the oral tradition of monastic centres. This does not however imply that there was any integral correlation between the ritual and the purpose of the myth. It seems more likely that the association with ritual occasions would serve to heighten the importance of what the myth was meant to convey, for with the compilation of the texts in a literary form, making them accessible to literate members of society, the association with ritual perceptibly weakens. The texts referred to above were in the main compiled and edited by about the middle of the first millennium AD, but earlier versions of the myths and narrative stereotypes are known from earlier texts, some of which go back to the first millennium BC. There was therefore both time and incentive to recognize the narrative and the symbols of the myths for changing social contexts. The texts drew in the main from the earlier oral tradition and were transferred to a written form in the first millennium AD. In spite of this, *Purāṇas* were frequently treated as part of the oral tradition with the reciting of the texts to large audiences. Both categories of sources came into prominence during the period when Buddhism and Vaiṣṇavism, in addition to their religious role, were performing the function of being agencies of acculturation for those for whom the Great Tradition had hitherto been inaccessible. Such texts reflected the social concerns of the present even though they treated of the social concerns of the past. The significance of this lies in the fact that it is also by the mid-first millennium AD (and in later centuries) that these texts—and the *vaṃśānucarita* section of the *Purāṇas* in particular—are used for the more secular purpose of providing lineage links and genealogical connections for the families which gave rise to the multiple dynasties of the time.

In a historical tradition origin myths play a crucial role as they provide a point of commencement. In the *itihāsa-purāṇa* tradition the origin myth referred to or implied is that of the Flood. It occurs first in the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* and is found again in the *Mahābhārata* and *Purāṇas*, there being a substantial difference of time between the first and the last version.[12] The *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* version relates that Manu, primaeval man, was performing his morning ablutions when a fish came into his hands. It asked to be reared and protected and promised Manu safety from the deluge in return, explaining to Manu that the gods had decided to punish mankind by unleashing a massive flood to destroy all creation. The fish grew larger in time. On the eve of the flood it commanded Manu to build a ship for himself, in which Manu escaped from the flood. The ship was tied to the fish who swam through the waters and lodged it on the northern mountain. When the water subsided it glided down the mountain slope and returned Manu to Jambudvīpa. In one account Manu being alone and desirous of sons observed austerities and performed a sacrifice to the gods from which a woman was born and she was called Iḍā (or Iḷā in other versions). Through her Manu generated this race.

The story is repeated in some of the *Purāṇas* but with certain significant additions. In the *Matsya Parāṇa* the fish is described as an incarnation of Viṣṇu—the *Matsya-avatāra*. Iḷā is a hermaphrodite, hence called by the cognate Iḷa-Iḷā, and is the progenitor of one of the two royal lineages, the Candravaṃśa or lunar lineage. Manu's eldest son Ikṣvāku was the progenitor of the Sūryavaṃśa or solar lineage. In some texts however the male Iḷa is referred to as the eldest son who was inadvertently changed into a woman, Iḷā. To these lineages belonged all those who came to be regarded as legitimate *kṣatriyas*. Manu being the originator of the lineages framed the rules and laws of government and collected one-sixth of the produce of the land as tax. The *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* omits the story of the flood in the *vaṃśānucarita* section but refers to the birth of Iḷā as the daughter of Manu and states that through the goodwill of the gods she was able to switch her form from female to male and back as occasion demanded.[13]

The flood assumes the primary precondition of water from out of which the known creation arises. The great flood caused the total destruction of the world and this is a recognized stage in the cycle of the time concept, what Eliade would call the abolition of profane time.[14] The beginnings of history therefore emerge from a condition which has no antecedents: it is in fact symbolic of the very beginning. However the negation of antecedents is not absolutely total since Manu is not created out of the flood but exists prior to it. Further creation follows from the flood. Repetition occurs frequently in myths of renewal such as the story of the flood and in such cases the abolition of profane time is a marker separating mythical time from historical time. The latter emerges from a condition of renewal where the vestiges of the old have been destroyed.

The choice of the fish as the saviour is obvious since the fish alone could survive the flood and this is used to good effect in the Puranic version where it is referred to as the *Matsya-avatāra*. The myth is brought into service as a means of exalting the deity Viṣṇu and introducing him into what was an old and well-established myth through the mechanism of the *avatāra*. This endows Viṣṇu with antiquity and enhances his image as the deity who was willing to take on the lowly form of the fish in order to save man. It might be worth mentioning in passing that the Sumerian god Enki, who in the Sumerian version of the flood myth saved Ziusudra, the Sumerian counterpart of Manu, is often represented as a fish in later Mesopotamian mythology in which capacity he acts as a saviour deity.[15]

That Manu procreates through his daughter possibly reflects a patrilineal emphasis known from other myths of such societies where an incestuous relationship also occurs in origin myths.[16] More plausibly it may indicate the symbolic insistence of the purity of lineage, that ultimately the mother–father of the founders of the lineages was the child of Manu and created from a sacrifice. The derivation of the Candravaṃśa lineage from a hermaphrodite suggests a variation on the idea of twins or siblings as parents, stressing again the purity of lineage. It is significant that in the widely accepted description of the utopia, the land of the Uttara Kurus, lineage identities are not required for legitimising procreation.[17] The *Purāṇas* repeat the idea in the story of the evolution of society where it is said that Brahmā created the earth and then four sets of human beings, each consisting of a thousand couples.[18] Life was idyllic and easy. But this did not last, for ultimately decay set in together with the emergence of the four *varṇas* and a general falling off from the Utopian beginnings. Yet in a late section of the *Ṛg Veda* the rejection of sibling incest is associated with the god of death, Yama, and his sister, Yami, suggesting that the idea even as myth was being questioned.[19] However, in Puranic sources Yama is sometimes contrasted with Manu (associated with life), both being sons of Vivasvat.[20] That one of the royal lineages was born from a female form was obviously rather galling in later times when women were of low social status and on par with the *śūdras*. This is sought to be explained away in the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* by the statement that during the course of the sacrificial ritual an inaccuracy occurred and, although Manu had been performing the sacrifice for the obtaining of sons, a daughter was born.[21] The situation was retrieved somewhat by Mitra and Varuṇa permitting the daughter to become an hermaphrodite. In actual fact the male–female distinction was necessary for the purpose of the myth and was required as a distinguishing feature of the two lineages.

In terms of the bi-polarity of symbols the lineages were separated by the one being associated with the sun and the other with the moon.[22] Evidently the lineages had to be kept distinct. This is apparent from the structure of the lineages for the two groups. The Candravaṃśa or Aila appears to be a segmentary lineage system where each male child and his male progeny is treated as a separate segment of the lineage and the descent group of each is recorded.[23] Such a record inevitably covers a wide geographical area—central, western, northern and parts of eastern India. The Sūryavaṃśa or Ikṣvāku lineage on the other hand records only the descent by primogeniture of a few lines and is far more limited in area as well as being confined chiefly to the middle Ganga valley. The difference in the structure of lineages may also indicate the more sedentary settlement of the Ikṣvāku as against a society more given to migrating groups among the Aila.

The choice of the two lineage names, the Sun and the Moon, are significant as the dominant planetary pair. Perhaps the myth refers to a belief in an early division into moieties of the tribes or two rival groups. Alternatively it could have been an attempt at orderliness on the part of the compilers of the *Purāṇas*, to weave the many dynastic strands into two main currents and finally to a single origin. It is not surprising that the word Manu provided the generic base for *mānava* meaning mankind.

The variation between the early and later version of the myth as in the *Satapatha Brāhmaṇa* and the *Purāṇas* shows the manner in which it was used for two purposes pertinent to the new concerns of the later period. The readjustment of the myth to Vaiṣṇava religious purposes is self-evident in the idea of the *Matsya-avatāra*. The latching on of one of the two royal lineages to Iḷa-Iḷā and Ikṣvāku, the children of Manu, and thereby indirectly to the flood story, was an effective means of giving both antiquity and prestige to the lineages. The historically attested dynasties from the fourth century BC onwards appear to have had little interest in proclaiming their lineage origins. The concern with lineage and genealogical connections involving either the Sūryavaṃśa or the Candravaṃśa are more marked in the early centuries AD and become quite obsessive in some parts of India after the mid-first millennium AD. This concern may have necessitated the adaptation of earlier myths to new interests. Information on what was believed to be the 'history' of the lineages would have been preserved as part of the oral tradition by the *sūta* and the *māgadha*. It is believed that this oral tradition was taken over, probably by priestly authors, in the process of the compiling of the *Purāṇas*, some of which date to the middle of the first millennium AD.[24] The neat arrangement of the lineages and their segments could well have been worked out in the process of adjusting the earlier myth and the new version would then provide the validation for the new lineage connections. The reference to Manu framing the laws and collecting the tax would have underlined the legitimacy of these two functions for those who were the descendants of Manu.

Curiously, there is a striking parallel to this in the Mesopotamian tradition. The story of the flood from Sumerian texts is remarkably similar to the version of the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* in its details. Deluge myths as the genesis of cultures are by no means rare. What is of interest however is the particulars in which the versions seem to agree. It is now well-known that the Sumerian myth found its way via the Babylonian version into the Bible story of Noah's ark.[25] It has also been argued that the Greek version in which Zeus sends a flood to punish mankind and the survivor from the flood is Deucalion, the son of Prometheus (or in later versions Ogygus), is a myth derived from the Mesopotamian original, since the occurrence of the flood and the attitude of the gods towards man are not in keeping with the Greek stereotypes regarding natural calamities and the deities.[26] The Sumerian flood myth is sometimes associated with the archaeological evidence of the massive flooding of a group of cities in the delta of the

Tigris-Euphrates valley, an event generally dated to the end of the fourth millennium BC.[27] Is it possible that the Sumerian myth found its way to the Harappans and via the Harappans entered the Vedic tradition? What is even more curious is that in the late third millennium BC the Sumerian flood myth is worked into the story of the king-lists of ancient Mesopotamia.[28] These refer to the mythical seven pre-diluvian kings, then the coming of the flood and the survivor who is associated with the descent of kingship on to various cities of ancient Mesopotamia. Indian sources also refer in sequence to the seven pre-diluvian Manus, the flood and then the royal lineages which succeeded. It would seem that the Mesopotamians made the same use of their earlier Sumerian flood as did the Indians in searching for an earlier sanction to an existing situation of a later period.

The genealogical sections of the *Purāṇas*, with their recital of king-lists and descent groups, are punctuated with myths relating to the supposedly more important personalities. The narration of the Candravaṃśa lineage in the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* is a case in point and is interspersed with stories. This was in part a mnemonic device as well as an attempt to embellish the otherwise rather dry narration of succession-lists. What is more important from our point of view is the fact that the two ancestral figures from whom the main Candravaṃśa lineage segments trace their origin—Purūravas and, of a later generation, Yayāti—are in each case introduced through a well-known and frequently repeated myth.[29] Purūravas has the female Iḷā as his mother and Soma, the moon-god, as his grandfather. That his descendants were the progeny of Soma would further strengthen the nomenclature of Candravaṃśa. This idea is echoed in at least one Candravaṃśa royal family of the early medieval period, the Candella, who claim the moon god as one of their original ancestors.[30]

The legend of Purūravas and Urvaśī is related in full, following in detail the version earlier recorded in the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* in preference to the variant in the *Mahābhārata*. The earliest version of the myth in the *Ṛg Veda* reads as an inversion of the Cupid and Psyche story.[31] The king Purūravas falls in love with the *apsarā* Urvaśī who has been banished to earth for a temporary period. She agrees to live with him on condition that she should never see him in the nude. After some time the Gandharvas decide to call her back to the celestial regions and arrange one night for her pet rams to be stolen. As Purūravas rushes after the thief there is a flash of lightning which reveals him in his nudity to Urvaśī, whereupon she vanishes. The distraught king wanders for many years in search of her and eventually finds her. She does not return to him but does bear him sons. The Ṛgvedic version appears to be incomplete and there may have been more to the story. In the version recorded in the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*, Purūravas is anxious to join the Gandharvas and thereby live permanently with Urvaśī.[32] The Gandharvas require him to kindle three fires and perform some sacrifices, after which he is accepted into their world. In the *Mahābhārata* the king is killed by the *brāhmaṇas* whom he disturbs during their sacrificial rituals.[33]

The myth has in the past been interpreted as a solar myth with Purūravas representing the sun and Urvaśī the vanishing dawn.[34] A more plausible interpretation suggests that the latter two versions are mythological variants of each other, the significance of the action being that Purūravas is being sacrificed.[35] The sacrifice of the male, symbolized by his kindling three fires and then being taken to the world of Gandharvas, was associated with certain matriarchal mother-goddess cults. The myth therefore would represent the transitional phase to patrilineal society. It is further argued that Purūravas having a hermaphrodite parent is not only an attempt to link him with Manu via Iḷā but is also indicative of a transition to a patrilineal society from an earlier matrilineal one. But as we have seen, the symbolism of a hermaphrodite does not necessarily indicate such a transition. The repeated occurrence of the myth in a variety of texts points to the mythological significance attached to Purūravas as the founder of the Candravaṃśa lineage. Its occurrence in a lineage context as well gives added status to the descent of Purūravas's progeny from an *apsarā*. Of the many sons whom Urvaśī bore to Purūravas, two received particular attention. The eldest was Āyus through whom the main lineages of the Candravaṃśa descended; and the other was Amāvasu whose line included Paraśurāma, the destroyer of the *kṣatriyas*, suggesting thereby a balancing of lineages.

Of Purūravas's sons the main lineage goes via the eldest son Āyus to his eldest son Nahus whose eldest son Yati declined the throne, whereupon it went to his younger brother Yayāti, the emphasis being on primogeniture. At this point there is the famous myth of Yayāti who in old age seeks to exchange his years for the youth of one of his sons.[36] He asks each one in turn, starting with the eldest, Yadu, who refuses, as indeed do each of the next three, Druhyu, Turvaśa and Anu. These three are cursed by Yayāti with the statement that none of their progeny shall possess dominion. The youngest, Pūru, readily agrees to the request of his father and takes upon himself his father's old age. Ultimately, after many years, when Yayāti is exhausted with his youth, he accepts his old age back from Pūru. Before dying he appoints Pūru as his successor and gives him sovereignty over the main kingdom, the *madhya-deśa* (in the main the Ganga–Yamuna Doāb), which should otherwise by rights have gone to Yadu. The eldest son Yadu is sent to the territories to the south-west of the *madhya-deśa*, and the other three to the southeast, the west and the north. The *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* states that Pūru was made the supreme monarch of the earth and his brothers governed as viceroys.[37] The *Mahābhārata* has an elaborate version of the myth and explains further that from Yadu there descended the Yādavas, Turvaśa produced the Yavanas, Druhyu produced the Bhojas and Anu a variety of *mleccha* peoples, i.e. those regarded as socially inferior.[38] This version takes the story further, involving Yayāti's attempt to enter heaven.

The Yayāti myth has been the subject of a lengthy analysis in which the emphasis has been on an explanation of the symbolism of not only the youth-age syndrome associated with the Yayāti-Pūru relationship but also the expression of values such as valour, sacrifice, riches and, above all, truth.[39] A more narrow interpretation linked to the requirements of the historical tradition indicates two obvious emphases. Firstly, the myth explains the lack of observance of the rule of primogeniture where the eldest son is sent to a distant area and the youngest son succeeds to the throne. Secondly, it highlights the supremacy of the Pūru lineage as being the superior one among the *kṣatriyas* since Pūru inherits the sovereignty. The Druhyu, Turvaśa and Anu lineages tend to die out or else get merged with the Pūru and this takes care, genealogically, of an otherwise impossibly wide distribution of descendants. Significantly, the superiority of the Pūru lineage is contrasted with the low status of the others where in the *Mahābhārata*, as we have seen, they are regarded as *mlecchas*. The Yayāti myth also provides an explanation for why non-*kṣatriya* groups are not recorded in the genealogies. Subsequent to this myth, the narrative of the Candravaṃśa lineage becomes substantially that of the descendants of Yadu and Pūru. In a sense, the events of the *Mahābhārata* war suggest a kind of reversal of the relationship between these two descent groups, where it is the offspring of Pūru who seek the help of the offspring of Yadu and the latter play the dominant role. The myth also serves to explain the migration and settlement of tribes. The Pūrus in Vedic literature are associated with the Sarasvatī region and the Punjab.[40] The Yayāti myth would account for a possible migration into the *madhya-deśa* and perhaps the reorganizing of the settlement in that area. Similarly the Yadus are also associated with the Punjab and their appearance in western India would have to be explained.[41]

The emphasis on primogeniture is continually underlined in many texts. This after all is the crux of the events which form the core of the two epics, the *Mahābhārata* and the *Rāmāyaṇa*. Where the law is not observed the breaking of the law has to be justified. This is clearly set out in an earlier section of the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* in the myth of Pṛthu the son of Veṇa, a myth which also occurs in other texts.[42] We are told that among the early kings of the earth was Veṇa who obstructed the sacrifices. His opposition to the Vedic *sūtras* and *yajñas* provoked the antagonism of the *ṛṣis* who put him to death by piercing him with stalks of the sacred *kuśa* grass. In the absence of a king there was now a threat of anarchy. So the *ṛṣis* churned the left thigh of Veṇa and there sprang up a short, dark, ugly man whom they called Niṣāda, a name derived from the command of the *ṛṣis* who told him to 'sit down' (*ni-ṣada*). The *ṛṣis* were unhappy with what they had produced so they banished him and he became the ancestor of all the *mlecchas* and the wild tribes such as the Kirāta, Pulinda and Śabara. The *ṛṣis* then churned the right arm of Veṇa and there sprang up a beautiful man whom they called Pṛthu (the broad or expansive one). He was righteous in his manner, introduced cattle-rearing and the plough, and his reign was so prosperous that the earth was named Pṛthivī in memory of him.

The wickedness of Veṇa is ascribed to the usual reason that he objected to the teaching of the *Vedas*. It is significant that he can be put to death only by the *ṛṣis*, who alone have the power to assassinate kings. His death is caused by the *kuśa* grass used in the sacred rituals of Vedic ceremonies. The fear of revolt against and assassination of legitimate kings is evident from the fear of resulting anarchy. This sentiment is in conformity with the concept of *matsyānyāya* as explained in the *Mahābhārata* where, in a condition of anarchy, the large fish devour the small fish.[43] The legitimacy of succession has to be maintained by producing a successor from the body of Veṇa. It is his left side which produces the ungainly, primitive successor who has to be exiled and the right side which produces the appropriate successor, conforming to the symbolism of the left being impure and the right pure. The association of Niṣāda with the wild tribes, food-gatherers perhaps, is juxtaposed with the introduction of agriculture by

Pṛthu and it is through the latter that the earth prospers. That the elder son was banished in favour of the younger could only be justified by pointing to the inadequacies of the elder. The contrast however is so extreme that one almost suspects an association of guilt with the usurpation by the younger son. Could this myth have symbolized the overpowering of the legitimately settled food-gathering cultures by the agriculturalists, in a period which saw the gradual encroaching of agriculture into new lands via the grants of land to religious donees and to officials, when the former cultures would henceforth always be associated with the dark and the ugly and the latter with that which is beautiful and prosperous? Vedic sources mention Niṣāda and Pṛthu but in unrelated contexts. Niṣāda appears to have been a general term used for non-Aryan tribes and Pṛthu was the first of kings and associated with the invention of agriculture.[44] It is from the sacrifice performed at the birth of Pṛthu that there emerged the *sūta* and the *māgadha* who are told that their function is to eulogize the king and praise his actions.[45] Perhaps historical consciousness (to the extent that this is embodied in bards and chroniclers) was believed to coincide with the development of agricultural society.

Another myth relating directly to primogeniture occurs at a later stage in the Candravaṃśa lineage, in connection with the brothers Devāpi and Śantanu of the Pūru lineage.[46] For twelve years there has been a drought in the kingdom and this is explained as arising from Śantanu, the younger brother, ruling in place of the elder, Devāpi who has gone into the forest. The situation can be righted only if Devāpi can be brought back. When Santanu's minister hears this he despatches some heretics to the forest who instruct Devāpi in anti-Vedic doctrines. This annoys the *brāhmaṇas* who declare that Devāpi is degraded and unfit to rule, whereupon there is rain. Earlier versions of the myth in the *Ṛg Veda* and *Nirukta* attribute the supercession of the elder brother to his becoming an ascetic or his suffering from a skin disease, both perfectly legitimate reasons for supercession.[47] In these versions Devāpi rejects the throne when offered to him and performs a ritual which results in rain. In the Puranic version the Vedic story is readjusted so as to highlight the importance of primogeniture.

Myths emphasizing primogeniture are relatively rare in the Sūryavaṃśa sections of the genealogies for these record descent only of the eldest son or the legitimate successor. In the Candravaṃśa lineage the stress on primogeniture was required from time to time so that the senior descent group in the segmentary system could be clearly demarcated. Where the procedure was reversed it had to be explained. The myth would serve both to legitimize a junior line which might have become more powerful, as is suggested by the Yayāti myth, and also to ensure that technically at least the core kingdoms remained with the 'senior' lineages.

Mythology in the Buddhist sources relates essentially to two main areas, origin myths of tribes and places and the legend of the life of the Buddha. In later Buddhist texts there are myths connected with the *Theras* and the Saṅgha, but these are often derivative of the earlier myths. The earlier myths tend to be fairly traditional and are often either borrowings from the Puranic tradition or come from a common source of myths which supplied both the Puranic and the Buddhist texts. What is of interest are the similarities in the origin myths as recorded in the two traditions as well as the deviations.

The most important of the clans is of course that of the Śākyas to which the Buddha belonged. The Śākyas are traced back to the Ikṣvāku lineage or the Okkāka as it is called in the Pāli sources.[48] In one text we are told that king Okkāka had five sons and four daughters by his chief queen. On her death the king married a young woman who, when she bore the king a son, wanted her son to be the heir. The king was persuaded to exile his elder children and the five brothers and four sisters travelled to the Himalayan foothills. Here they met the sage Kapila who advised them to build a city and settle in that region. The city therefore was called Kapilavastu. The eldest brother remained unmarried and the other four brothers married their four sisters and from them there descended the tribe of the Śākyas. The *Mahāvastu*, a text of a later period, has a variation on this, in that there are five brothers and five sisters, the name of the king is Sujāta, and it is his concubine who wishes her son to be king.[49]

The Śākyas had a close relationship with the Koliyas according to another version of the origin myth of both.[50] The Śākyas in this case consisted of five sisters and four brothers. Since the degradation of the race had to be prevented it was decided to appoint the eldest sister as the mother and the remaining brothers and sisters paired off. The eldest sister developed leprosy and was therefore put into a deep pit in the forest where she was one day threatened by a tiger. She was rescued by Rāma, the king of Banāras, who had also been exiled because of leprosy but had managed to cure himself. He therefore cured her as well and married her and they lived in a city which they had built. They sent their sons to Kapilavastu so that they could marry their maternal uncles' daughters. The young men kidnapped the Śākya princesses and were not prevented from doing this since they were related to the Śākyas and the kidnapping was almost customary. It was from these marriages that the Koliya tribe descended and was so called because their city of origin was established at a place where a large *kol* tree was growing. The *Mahāvastu* version states that the princess suffering from leprosy was left in a forest where she was discovered by the royal sage Kola who took her to his hermitage.[51] Sixteen pairs of twin sons were born and were called the Koliyas and were sent to Kapilavastu from where they obtained their brides. The settlement of the Koliyas adjoined that of the Śākyas and the two were separated by the river Rohiṇī, the waters of which, used for irrigation, were the cause of dispute between the Śākyas and the Koliyas.[52]

In a late text the Moriyas (Mauryas) were also associated with the Śākyas.[53] They are described as those Śākyas who fled from Kapilavastu when Viḍuḍbha, the king of Kosala, attacked the Śākyas for having deceived him into marrying a maid-servant rather than the princess who was promised to him. This group of Śākyas settled in a *pipal* forest, the Pipphalivana, which abounded in peacocks—*mayura/mora*—from which their name was eventually derived. This appears to have been a later attempt to link Aśoka Maurya with the family of the Buddha.

The origin of the Licchavis again relates them to the royal family of Banaras.[54] The chief queen gave birth to a lump of flesh which was put in a box and floated down the river. It was picked up by a hermit who nurtured its contents until eventually the lump of flesh changed into a twin boy and girl. They had such a translucent beauty that they appeared to have no skin, hence the name, *nicchavi*; or alternatively, everything seemed to get absorbed into them and thus they were called *linacchavi*. Eventually they came to be called Licchavi. The children were adopted by local cowherds but as they proved to be totally undisciplined they had to be abandoned (*vajjitabba*). An area was demarcated and given over to them and this was called Vajji, an obvious attempt to explain the name of the confederacy of eight clans commonly referred to as the Vṛjji or Vajji confederacy. The boy and girl were married and had sixteen pairs of sibling twins. Since the city in which they lived had to be continually enlarged (*viśālikata*) they came to call it Veśāli/Vaiśāli. The Licchavis were to become a powerful tribe and were the main contenders for the control over the Ganga valley against the kingdom of Magadha. Although defeated at this juncture they continued to maintain their status in the Terai-Nepal area, for not only does Candragupta I make much of his marriage to a Licchavi princess[55] but they also provided an early and important dynasty in Nepal. This is assuming that the later Licchavis were descended from the earlier ones and this was not just a political claim. In some of the later *vaṃśāvalīs* of Nepal the lineage of the Licchavis is not only linked to the Ikṣvākus but the actual descent is given via Raghu, Aja, Daśaratha, eight other kings and then the Licchavis, but the Buddhist origin myth is not repeated.[56]

The origin of the Śākyas is related in fuller detail in the biographies of the Buddha from the northern Sanskrit Buddhist texts, some of which have been collated in a Chinese version.[57] This version makes the same points as the earlier one but underlines the emphases more strongly. In the dynasty of the Fish king was born a ruler called Ta-man-tso. Not having a son he became an ascetic and gave his kingdom to his ministers. When he was old and incapable of looking after himself, his disciples, if they had to leave him alone for any length of time, would place him in a basket and hang the basket from a tree. This would safeguard him against wild animals, snakes and the like. One day a hunter shot him by mistake. His disciples, full of grief, cremated his body. But two drops of blood had fallen from the wound onto the ground. Out of these drops of blood sprang up two stalks of sugarcane (*ikṣa*) which on maturing burst asunder and revealed a boy in one and a girl in the other. The children were taken to the ministers who agreed to recognize them as the children of the late king. The boy was called Ikṣvāku and Sūryavaṃśa and the girl Subhadrā. They were married and a son Janta was born to them. Ikṣvāku had four sons by a later, second marriage, all of whom were fine, manly young men. Subhadrā was now concerned that her son, who was not as attractive, would be overlooked for the succession. She therefore plotted to have the four boys banished. They went into exile and travelled north across the Bhāgīrathī and into the Snowy Mountains, accompanied by their four sisters. They arrived in a beautiful valley where the sage Kapila dwelt and settled there. So as not to pollute their race they married their sisters and founded the city of Kapilavastu. Because they were able (*śaknoti*) to govern well they came to be called Śākyas. The story then continues to trace the lineage of descent from the princes down to Śuddhodana, the father of the Buddha.

This sample of origin myths indicates certain characteristics which provide some clues to social concerns. In each case the myth attempts to explain not only the origin of the tribe but also the city associated with that particular *janapada* or territory where the tribe eventually settled. The inclusion of the city seems to have almost equal importance as indeed the cities of the *janapadas* in the latter part of the first millennium BC had considerable political and economic importance. In the *janapadas* with the *saṅgha* or *gaṇa* system of government (oligarchic government or chiefdoms), the city was the nucleus of political life and would inevitably be seen as arising almost coterminously with the *janapada*.

The attempt to explain the name of the clan is a striking feature of these myths if only because the etymologies are so patently false. The survival for example of the extremely far-fetched etymology for Licchavi is quite remarkable. It would seem that the original etymology for these names was either forgotten or lost and clumsy attempts were made in a later period to invent an etymology. This would also account for the variation in the explanation. Thus Śākya is derived from *Śaknoti* (to be able), the *śaka* tree and *sakahi* (with reference to their marrying their sisters). Totem worship may be suggested as a possible explanation but this would be a plausible theory only if there had been a consistency of association with a single object in each case.

The selection of clans whose origin and genealogy are considered worthy of record are invariably those which had *saṅgha* and *gaṇa* systems of government. These gave prominence to the *kṣatriya* families since they were the ones who had the right to be represented in the *santhāgāra* or assembly-hall. The *kṣatriya* members of these *janapadas* were frequently inter-related and their territories lay in geographical proximity to each other. The *kṣatriya* families were again those who were associated with the Buddha, Mahāvīra and other heterodox teachers. None of these origin myths are concerned with the genesis of the neighbouring kingdoms where monarchy prevailed, even though the Buddha after his enlightenment preached more frequently in the kingdoms of Magadha and Kāśi.

The insistence on siblings or, even better, sibling twins as the procreators of the *jana* is explained in the myths as necessary for maintaining the purity of lineage, where the lineage can be traced back to those of identical blood. Related to this was possibly also the idea that sibling marriages would be the closest simulation of the situation which prevailed in the Uttara-Kuru utopia, which utopia was equally acceptable to the Buddhists and to the *brāhmaṇas*. Periods of genesis would inevitably be associated with the earliest golden age or utopia from where the origin myth would begin. The occurrence of the sixteen pairs of twins makes a rather special number. It may perhaps be explained as a multiple of two (2 × 2 × 2 × 2) where the base of two would again convey the sense of a twin or couple. The sibling marriage symbolism is so strong that in the *Daśaratha Jātaka*, Rāma and Sītā are described as brother and sister and finally reign as consorts, a distinctly Buddhist transformation of the *Rāma-kathā*.[58]

The prevalence of cross-cousin marriage would also seem apparent, especially that involving the maternal uncle's daughter. This may reflect an actual social situation or it may be symbolic. In the Chinese account, the marriage is not only mentioned but is explained as being prevalent by the pointed reference to there being no objection to it. This might perhaps indicate that in later periods the system of cross-cousin marriage had to be explained or that the audience for this particular text was unfamiliar with the system.

The reference to cross-cousin marriage in the Pāli texts and in the epics, *Purāṇas* and other literature, raises the question of the prevalence of the system. These references are a contradiction of the śāstric rules on the observance of *sapiṇḍa* and *sagotra* limitations with regard to marriage. Some late *dharmaśāstras* refer to the legitimacy of cross-cousin marriages by quoting a few ambiguous passages from Vedic literature, but far more forcefully by arguing that where it was a customary practice, as for example in the southern regions, it was a permitted relationship even for *brāhmaṇas*.[59] It has recently been suggested that the references to cross-cousin marriage in texts pertaining to northern India may be traces of an earlier Dravidian substratum culture, particularly as the texts appear to have been composed in areas where cross-cousin marriage was the prevalent pattern, as in the case of the Pāli canon edited and compiled in Ceylon.[60] That the acceptability of the system was doubted in cases other than those occurring in the Buddhist texts is evident from the attempt to find an explanation for it or to treat it somewhat contemptuously.[61] In such cases the reference to cross-cousin marriage may well be a memory of an earlier social custom among some people which gave way later, to the more prevalent disapproval of cousin marriage, at least among the elite groups of northern India.

In the Buddhist tradition however there appears to be more than either the memory of a substratum culture or the influence of southern social usage. There is a deliberate attempt to associate cross-cousin marriage with elite groups. This would heighten the antiquity of the custom as well as the exclusive character of the groups involved. It has been argued that, in order to prolong the relationship established by marriage between kin-groups, two techniques were used to record the relationship.[62] One was that the original relationship could be traced back to sibling incest, thereby emphasizing the close blood tie; the other was the frequent introduction of cross-cousin marriage at appropriate points in the genealogy among the related lineages. It is evident that at least the Śākyas and Koliyas were closely connected by kinship and the use of both these techniques in their records may have been an attempt to emphasize the connection. The techniques would be identical for both matrilineal and patrilineal groups so that cross-cousin marriage need not indicate, as it was once thought to, the precondition of a matrilineal society. At another level incest is a logical explanation of how two people could found a lineage. That the questioning if not the tabu on incest had crept into some of the later Buddhist texts is evident for example from the reference to the Śākyas being rebuked by the Koliyas for cohabiting with their own sisters.[63]

The *kṣatriya* status of the clan is both assumed and made implicit in the fact that the origin is always from an established royal family either of the Ikṣvāku lineage or from the king of Banaras. The Ikṣvāku lineage would make these clans off-shoots of the Sūryavaṃśa. The repeated theme of exile would either point to their being dissident groups or else that they migrated from the family base, generally a kingdom along the Ganga river or the middle Ganga plain, to the foothills of the Himalayas. The theme of exile would also become necessary where a major social tabu, that of sibling incest, was being broken even if only symbolically. Possibly, these were groups of cultivators in origin, belonging to the *jana* (but perhaps not to the *rājakula* or the landowning groups), who had migrated in search of new land and, on becoming prosperous, adopted the *kṣatriya* genealogy of the *jana* from which they came. Equally possibly, they could have been local tribes who, on becoming agriculturalists and acquiring landownership and status, sought links with the prestigious Ikṣvāku tradition and invented the myth of exile.

That there was some element of discordance is evident from the fact that, in spite of the Buddhist insistence on their *kṣatriya* status, these tribes are never listed in the Puranic genealogies. If it was merely a question of discounting those who were the fountain-head of heterodox movements, then surely the Puranic genealogies would have deliberately included them and described them either as *vrātya kṣatriyas* or else given them *śūdra* status.[64] The disavowal of monarchy as the accepted political system may in part explain their exclusion from the Puranic lists. In the case of Vaiśāli for example, the period of monarchy is referred to in the Puranic genealogies but there is silence with regard to the period when it was the nucleus of the Vṛjjian confederacy. Even though the Śākyas and Koliyas in their myths emanate from royal families, they do not appear to have repeated the experience of monarchy and their political organization seems more often to have been oligarchic, the emphasis being on political egalitarianism extending to at least the *kṣatriya* families. The reference to sixteen pairs of twins can be interpreted as an attempt at the symbolic diffusion of power within a small but powerful social group. In a monarchical situation, presumably, there would have been a single pair of twins. That substantially the same myth is related for all these *janas* suggests that they formed a separate group; probably in origin an extended kin group settled in geographical proximity to each other. Alternatively, the use of a similar origin myth may have been deliberate; to emphasize a similarity of political and social culture and an exclusivity which separated them from the more common monarchical *janapadas.*

The expanded version of the myth in the *Mahāvastu* seems much more elaborate with an implicit attempt at providing explanations. Thus the name Ikṣvāku is introduced through the reference to the sugarcane stalks and the association with the Sūryavaṃśa lineage is also made clear. The location of Kapilavastu is more explicitly described as being north across the Bhāgīrathī and into the Snowy Mountains, presumably the proximity to the Himālaya. This explanation would be necessary for the new audiences of Buddhist literature who would be unfamiliar with northern India.

The theme of the exile of princes carries echoes of the *Rāmāyaṇa.* It would seem from the frequent references to this theme and to that of the abduction of princesses in Buddhist literature that exiled princes may well have been a stereotype of the folktale. The *Daśaratha Jātaka* suggests the possible existence of an earlier *Rāma-kathā*, the events of the *Jātaka* being a Buddhist version of the story of Rāma. It is not without significance that the events of the *Rāmāyaṇa* also concern the members of the Ikṣvāku-Sūryavaṃśa lineage.

The importance of the *kṣatriya* in society is also apparent from another myth which relates to the origin of government.[65] When the Buddha was asked about the origin of government he explained that to begin with the world was of a utopian order where no one laboured and time was passed in pleasant leisure. Gradually this golden age began to tarnish and evil crept into the ways of man. The cause of the decay was man's desire for possessions and this was reflected in the emergence of the family as a social institution with the possession of woman by man, and in the notion of personal property where fields were demarcated and were claimed by individuals. Ultimately the situation became so chaotic that the people gathered together and elected one from among them (the great elect or the *mahāsammata*) in whom they invested the power to make laws and maintain order and to whom as recompense for performing this unenviable task they agreed to pay a percentage of their produce.

The story apart from its strikingly rational assumptions reflects early thinking on the origin of the *kṣatriyas*. A demarcation is made between the period of common ownership of land and the later evolution of private ownership. Out of a non-stratified society there first arose the stratification of occupations. Subsequent to this, those who owned land were set apart and the establishment of the family is also associated with the cultivation of land. Ownership of land accelerates dispute and disequilibrium which can only be tentatively corrected by the imposition of an authority which lay above and beyond that invested in ordinary persons. The crux of the story relates to the two areas of *kṣatriya* interest, landownership and the exercise of political authority.

The readjustment of the format of the Buddhist origin myth of the Śākyas and the Koliyas to changed social conditions in a later period becomes apparent in the myth regarding Vijaya and the early history of Ceylon as recorded in the *Mahāvaṃsa*.[66] A princess of Vaṅga, too arrogant to accept a human husband, is married to a lion. She gave birth to a son Sīhabāhu and a daughter Sīhāsavalī but remained unhappy and homesick. Ultimately she persuaded Sīhabāhu to kill his father, the lion, whereupon the princess with her two children returned to her father's kingdom. But soon after this the children left her, wandered away to a distant place where they married each other, built themselves a city and established a kingdom. The marriage resulted in sixteen pairs of twin sons. Among these Vijaya was regarded as the eldest. He was however so evil that he had to be exiled but was permitted to take seven hundred attendants with him. He travelled at first to western India and finally arrived in Ceylon together with his attendants on the very day of Buddha's *nirvāṇa*. The island was inhabited only by *yakhas* and *yakhinīs* whom he subdued. He sent to India for wives for himself and his attendants and not only made the island fit for human habitation but became himself a virtuous king.

The myth seeks to introduce all the elements of the traditional origin myth of the Buddhist texts. There are also, underlying the story, many levels of assumptions. The geographical area of the story is very wide, starting with eastern India, moving to western India and from there to Ceylon. This is not the compact region of the earlier myths. At the time of the compilation of the text both eastern and western India were in close contact with Ceylon. The western contact is attested to linguistically, the Pāli of the Chronicles having an affinity with the western *prākṛit* of India. The eastern link may have been introduced to establish as close a connection as possible with the Buddhist homeland. The myth is replete with assumptions regarding the social order. Vijaya's unusual and supernatural origin is amply emphasized: he is the grandson of a lion, the son of an incestuous marriage and the eldest of sixteen pairs of twin brothers. Incest in this case again points to purity of descent. Uniqueness is further stressed by the sixteen pairs of twin brothers, although here the eldest stands out since the context is monarchy and not oligarchy. His social status is indicated by his royal antecedents both in the animal world and in the human. Royal antecedents also provide him with the economic means to travel the long distance from Vaṅga to Ceylon together with his attendants. The story of the exile was necessary to explain why anyone would travel such a distance to an island inhabited only by demons. It is appropriate that the man who founded the first human colony in Ceylon should arrive on the auspicious day of the Buddha's *parinirvāṇa*. Such a connection would be virtually inevitable in the *Mahāvaṃsa* which after all was the Chronicle of the major Buddhist monastery of Ceylon, the Mahāvihāra. The etymological interest is also clear from the attempt to explain the derivation of the name of the island—Sinhala—associated with a lion. The earlier origin myths had by now almost become archetypes. The story of Vijaya does not occur at the start of the *Mahāvaṃsa* but in the sixth chapter. Nevertheless it marks the commencement of the narrative of the history of Ceylon. Earlier chapters relate the story of the Buddha's visit to Ceylon and the conversion of Aśoka which prepares the ground for the arrival of Buddhism. This structure makes the narrative more purposive and strengthens the notion of the mission of Buddhism to Ceylon.

The social function of these origin myths in the context of the early Indian historical tradition appears to be fourfold: to establish kinship links, to emphasize the legitimacy of succession, to indicate the migration of important groups and to provide social status to those who had acquired political power. The recognition of kinship links among the *kṣatriya* families in the mid-first millennium BC was central to the question of rights of landownership and ultimately political authority. In the first millennium AD, with new claimants to *kṣatriya* status and political power in the many dynasties of the period, the kinship links were revived through the search for actual or fabricated genealogical connections.[67]

The legitimacy of succession was implicit in the genealogical links requiring *kṣatriya* antecedents. In the monarchical system there was the additional need to stress primogeniture. That this was a real concern is evident from other literature which stresses not only the need for hereditary succession but also the rights of seniority within it.[68] It is not surprising that this question crops up repeatedly in the literature of the mid-first millennium AD and later, where in plays such as the *Devīcandraguptam* and in historical biographies such as the *Harṣacarita* and the *Vikramānkadevacarita*, there is an elaborate justification for the transgressing of the rule.[69]

The theme of migration, often disguised as exile, sets the geographical dimensions of the social group and can be used to establish the rights and priority of a particular group over a particular region. This assumes significance in periods when new groups are moving in as entrepreneurs in either previously occupied areas or in newly opened up lands: the entrepreneurs in the mid-first millennium AD being the recipients of grants of land. Those who succeeded in establishing new dynasties would either have to link themselves genealogically with the descent groups, who were already associated with the area or else would have to introduce the idea of migration. The Sisodia Rajput link with the Sūryavaṃśa lineage and the migration of one of their ancestors from Lahore (associated with Lava the son of Rāma) to Rajasthan would form a case in point.[70] Puranic sources refer to the dispersal of the Haihayas (a sub-lineage of the Yādavas). This provided a useful peg for many early medieval dynasties to hang their genealogies on, such as the Kalacuris of Tripuri[71] and the Mūṣakavaṃśa of Kerala.[72] Exiled princes also provide one of the mechanisms by which local tradition can be hooked onto the 'classical' tradition and vice versa.

In both the *itihāsa-purāṇa* tradition and the Buddhist tradition, as far as origin myths are concerned, it is in the main the *kṣatriya* status which is sought to be validated. The origin myths of the *kṣatriya* clans in Buddhist literature are attempts to provide status for those who played an important part in the events relating to the establishment of Buddhism, and are the counterparts to the lineage myths in the Puranic tradition, both sets of myth endorsing the groups in political authority at the time. Nor is it coincidental that this search for validation through myth is systematized and recorded at the time when dynasties claiming *kṣatriya* status rose to political control and, in the Buddhist case, sectarian institutions of the Buddhist *saṅgha* were involved, albeit not always directly, in political authority.

Notes and References

* Published in Debiprasad Chattopadhyaya (ed.), *History and Society: Essays in Honour of Professor Niharranjan Ray*, Calcutta, 1978, 271–94. Essays in Honour of Professor Niharranjan Ray. Copyright © 1978 by K P Bagchi & Company. Used with permission. My colleagues Dr Satish Saberwal and Dr B.D. Chattopadhyaya read an earlier draft of this paper and discussed it with me.

1. G.S. Kirk, *The Nature of Greek Myths*, Harmondsworth, 1974, pp. 31ff.
2. Max Müller, *Chips from a German Workshop*, London, 1867, 68, vols. I & II.
3. A. Lang, *Custom and Myth*, London, 1884; *Myth, Ritual and Religion*, London, 1887.
4. W. Robertson Smith, *The Religion of the Semites*, London, 1894; J.E. Harrison, *Themis*, Cambridge, 1912.
5. As in *Magic, Science and Religion*, New York, 1948.
6. C. Levi–Strauss, *The Raw and the Cooked* and *From Honey to Ashes*, being the first two volumes of a longer work, *Mythologiques*, Paris, 1964–72. The more successful applications of the structural analysis of myth have been in the myths of pre-literate societies. F. Leach (ed.), *The Structural Study of Myth and Totemism*, London, 1967 and T.A. Sebeok (ed.), *Myth: A Symposium*, Indiana, 1955. Changes introduced in myths over a period of time in literate societies could add a worthwhile dimension even to structural analysis.
7. The notion of the archetype as developed by S. Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams*, New York, 1965, was of considerable influence. But the names of Jung and Cassirer are more closely associated with the growth of this idea. C.G. Jung and K. Kerenyi, *Introduction to a Science of Mythology*, London, 1963 and E. Cassirer, *The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, vol. 2, 'Mythical Thought', New Haven, 1955.
8. Eliade has touched on this theme in many of his writings but more especially in *The Myth of the Eternal Return*, *Myth and Reality*, and in *Patterns in Comparative Religion*, New York, 1963.

9. V. Turner, 'Myth and Symbol', in *The Encyclopaedia of Social Sciences*, vol. x.
10. Georges Dumezil's *Mythe et Épopée* in three volumes. An attempt has been made to represent his ideas in C. Scott Littleton, *The New Comparative Mythology*, London, 1973. Dumezil uses the theory of the three functions (which can be approximately translated as sanctity, coercion and fecundity) as the basic pattern of Indo-European symbolism and myth. None of the functions are precisely defined and the overlapping makes for a rather ambiguous analysis at times. Also associated with these ideas are the writings of Stig Wikander, especially the paper entitled 'La Legende des Pāṇḍavas et la substructure mythique du Mahābhārata', in Georges Dumezil, *Jupiter, Mars, Quirinus IV*.
11. K. Thomas, 'Anthropology and History', *Past and Present*, no. 24, April 1963, pp. 1ff.
12. *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*, I.8.1.1–10; *Matsya Purāṇa*, I.11–34; *Mahābhārata*, Vanaparvan, 185ff.
13. *Viṣṇu Purāṇa*, IV.1.
14. M. Eliade, *Myth and Reality*, pp. 5ff.
15. This point came up in a discussion with Professor A. Kilmer.
16. Sally Falk Moore, 'Descent and Symbolic Filiation', *The American Anthropologist*, no. 66, VI, part 1, 1964, pp. 1308–20.
17. *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa*, VIII.14–23; *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*, III.2.3.15; Aṭānāṭiya Sutta, *Dīgha Nikāya*, III.199.7ff.
18. *Vāyu Purāṇa*, VIII.176ff.
19. *Ṛg Veda*, X.10.
20. Sukumari Bhattacharji, *The Indian Theogony*, Cambridge, 1970, pp. 217–18.
21. *Viṣṇu Purāṇa*, IV.1.
22. The symbolism of the sun and the moon occurs frequently in Yoga and in Tantric texts although in these the sexual association is reversed: the moon is associated with the male and the sun with the female. M. Eliade, *Yoga*, Princeton, 1971, p. 239.
23. For a description of the segmentary system which fairly approximates some of the features of the Candravaṃśa see Marshall D. Sahlins, 'The Segmentary Lineage: An Organisation of Predatory Expansion', *The American Anthropologist*, vol. 63, no. 2, 1961, pp. 332–45.
24. F.E. Pargiter, *Ancient Indian Historical Tradition*, London, 1922, pp. 15ff.
25. A. Heidel, *The Babylonian Genesis*, Chicago, 1963.
26. G.S. Kirk, *The Nature of Greek Myths*, pp. 261ff.
27. L. Woolley, *Excavations at Ur*, London, 1954, pp. 34–6; *Ur of the Chaldees*, London, 1950, pp. 29ff. The *Cambridge Ancient History*, vol. I, part 1, pp. 353ff. Reliable evidence on substantial floods in India during this period (as available so far) would point to two areas and time brackets. The first would

be the flooding of Mohenjo-daro and the lower valley in the early second millennium BC (G. Dales, 'New Investigations at Mohenjo-daro', *Archaeology*, 1965, no. 18). The second would be that of the Ganga–Yamuna Doāb and particularly Hastināpur in the early first millennium BC (B.B. Lal, 'Excavations at Hastināpur', *Ancient India*, 1954 and 1955, nos 10 and 11). The second is certainly too late in time to have been the original of such a myth. More than likely the myth was not referring to any particular flood but rather to the possibility of a flood as a cataclysmic point of time and change and this notion may have arisen from the observation of recurring floods in the area.

28. Th. Jacobsen, *The Sumerian King-List*, Chicago, 1939.
29. *Viṣṇu Purāṇa*, IV.6 and 10.
30. N.S. Bose, *History of the Chandellas of Jejakabhukti*, Calcutta, 1956; E. Zannas and J. Auboyer, *Khajuraho*, The Hague, 1960, pp. 30ff.
31. *Ṛg Veda*, X.95.
32. *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*, XI.5.1.1ff.
33. *Mahābhārata*, Ādiparvan, 70.16ff.
34. Max Müller, *Chips from a German Workshop*, London, 1968, vol. IV, pp. 109ff.
35. D.D. Kosambi, *Myth and Reality*, Bombay, 1962, pp. 47ff.
36. *Viṣṇu Purāṇa*, IV.10.
37. *Viṣṇu Purāṇa*, IV.10.
38. *Mahābhārata*, Ādi-parvan, 80.
39. Georges Dumezil, *The Destiny of a King*, Chicago, 1973.
40. *Vedic Index*, II, pp. 11–12.
41. *Vedic Index*, p. 185.
42. *Viṣṇu Purāṇa*, I.13.
43. *Mahābhārata*, Śānti-parvan, 67, 16–24.
44. *Vedic Index*, vol. I, p. 452; *Vedic Index*, vol. II, p. 16.
45. *Viṣṇu Purāṇa*, I.13.
46. *Viṣṇu Purāṇa*, IV.20.
47. *Ṛg Veda*, X.98; *Nirukta*, II.10; *Bṛhaddevatā*, VII.155, 156ff.
48. *Sutta Nipāta*, 420ff; *Sutta Nipāta Commentary*, I, 352ff; *Sumaṅgalavilāsinī*, I. pp. 258–60.
49. B.C. Law, *Some Kṣatriya Tribes of Ancient India*, pp. 162ff, Varanasi, 1975, rpt.; *Mahāvastu*, I, pp. 348–52.
50. Ambattha Sutta, I.16 in *Dīgha Nikāya*, I; *Kuṇāla Jātaka*, no. 536, vol. V, p. 219.
51. H.C. Raychaudhuri, *Political History of Ancient India*, Calcutta, 1952, pp. 192ff.
52. *Kuṇāla Jātaka*, no. 536.
53. *Mahāvaṃsa Tīkā*, pp. 180ff.
54. Buddhaghoṣa, *Paramatthajotika*, Khuddakapatha, pp. 158–60.

55. S.R. Goyal, *A History of the Imperial Guptas*, Allahabad, 1967, pp. 81ff.
56. Paśupati inscription of Jayadeva, quoted in B.C. Law, *Kṣatriya Clans in Buddhist India*, pp. 28–9; J.F. Fleet (ed.), *Corpus Inscriptionum Indicarum*, III, pp. 133, 136, 155.
57. S. Beal, *Romantic History of Buddha*, London, 1920, pp. 18ff.
58. *Daśaratha Jātaka*, no. 461, vol. IV, p. 78.
59. P.V. Kane, *History of Dharmaśāstra*, II.1, Poona, 1941, pp. 460ff.
60. T.R. Trautmann, 'Cross-Cousin Marriage in Ancient North India', in T.R. Trautmann (ed.), *Kinship and History in South Asia*, Michigan, 1974.
61. *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*, X.54.18.
62. Sally Falk Moore, 'Descent and Symbolic Filiation'.
63. *Sutta Nipāta Commentary*, I.357; *Kuṇāla Jātaka*, no. 536.
64. *Manu*, X.22, does however refer to the Licchavis as *vrātya kṣatriyas*.
65. Aggañña Sutta in *Dīgha Nikāya*, III.93.
66. *Mahāvaṃsa*, VI.
67. For some references to fabricated genealogies, see D.C. Sircar, *Indian Epigraphy*, New Delhi, 1965, pp. 24ff.
68. *Arthaśāstra*, I, 17.34; *Majjhima Nikāya*, II.75; *Manu*, IX.105–9.
69. The first of these texts justifies the succession of Candragupta II, who, owing to the cowardly act of his elder brother Rāmagupta, had finally (it would seem from other sources) to kill his elder brother and usurp the throne. Both biographies concern the succession of younger brothers and here again an elaborate argument is produced to prove the justification for the younger brother. In the *Harṣacarita* the elder brother is killed by the enemy so that the justification is not so elaborate. In the *Vikramānkadevacarita* we are told that the god Śiva himself commanded the younger brother to usurp the throne for the sake of the well-being of the people and the prosperity of the kingdom.
70. J. Tod, *Annals and Antiquities of Rajasthan*, I. p. 176.
71. F. Kielhorn, 'Kalachuris of Tripuri', *Epigraphia Indica*, II, pp. 300–5.
72. T. Gopinath Rao, 'Extract from the Mūṣakavaṃśa ...', *Travancore Archaeological Series*, II, 1, no. 10, pp. 87–113. M.G.S. Narayanan, 'History from the Mūṣakavaṃśa', *P.A.-I.O.C*, Jadavpur, 1969.

9

*Clan, Caste and Origin Myths in Early India**

Many years ago, a group of us as young researchers were in conversation with Professor Niharranjan Ray and inevitably asked him how he saw the role of the researcher in the universe of knowledge. Characteristically his reply was that one should be like the fish which lives in water but never drowns. This may not be zoologically exact, but it was characteristic of his own work. Although formally a historian of art, there was in fact no aspect of history and its related disciplines in which he did not show an enquiring interest if not considerable knowledge. But at the same time he did not make a fetish of scholarship. His lively mind was frequently able to pick up the pieces which went into the making of the jigsaw of Indian history and this he did with style and no little degree of panache.

His studies of Indian art were not narrowly limited to art for he was well aware of its social context, a context which tied it to the broader contours of change over time. This in turn involved an analysis of ideology in artistic manifestations, an area which had already begun to be explored through the insights of Coomaraswamy. Niharranjan Ray was a historian of both art and society and therefore looked at them as inter-meshed. Frequently social history was a necessary background to generalizations about art history, but equally often, his work on social history had its own significance.

The involvement with the totality of social knowledge and the encouragement to others to do the same was what made him such a successful director of the Indian Institute for Advanced Study at Shimla, when it was first started. It was a period thick with Fellows who have now achieved distinction, and a frequency of seminars on themes which invariably produced some innovative thinking. If the Institute has been unable to take off in the manner in which Radhakrishnan had envisioned it, one major reason has been the unconcern of various governments, which through the years have been largely unaware of the intellectually generative function of such institutes. This lack of concern has expressed itself in the most banal fashion, in the repeated attempts to convert the present historic building in which the Institute has been housed, into a tourist hotel. But even buildings alone do not make an Institute of Advanced Study. The other imperative input, if the institution is to survive is the need for a fully equipped and well-organized library. Unfortunately those that govern us assume that research is born out of the minds of scholars unaided by reading and therefore deny us access to reading. Even if, over the last two decades, whilst the Ministry debated the priorities of tourism over advanced study, an attempt had been made just to finance an up-dated library, the Institute would have determined the choice. But in the vacillation about the future of the building, advanced studies have been the victim. Please forgive this carping. Unhappily scholars comply too easily with 'the authorities' and scholarship goes by the board. If at all an Indian intellectual heritage is both to be preserved and to be developed then scholarship has to be taken more seriously by those who provide the patronage and the wherewithal.

Despite all this, I am deeply appreciative of the honour which the Institute has done me in asking me to give the first Niharranjan Ray Lecture. I would like therefore to speak on a theme which interested him and on which he encouraged investigation. I shall be speaking on one of the major features of Indian history, namely the juxtaposition of clan-based societies to caste-based societies, what are sometimes referred to as *jana* and *jāti*, implicit in much of which is also often the transition from non-state to state systems, the latter generally taking the form of a monarchy. I would like to view it from the perspective of some of those texts which, it seems to me, are concerned with this change although perhaps we as historians have not given enough attention to this concern.

Possibly this neglect arises from the fact that historians have in the past looked only at the elite sections of society and read the texts from this perspective. With reference to early history the major problem is that sources from other levels of society are few and far between. Therefore deduction becomes an important part of historical analysis. Furthermore, the change which I have referred to is not uniform or identical in space and time. We know that it occurred in parts of the Ganga valley by the fourth century BC and occurred elsewhere at other times, in some places quite recently. Therefore, it not only requires us to re-examine our notions of periodisation but it also does not allow of any easy periodisation. The two forms were not dichotomous for the transition often carried over features from the one to the other. It frequently results in overlapping social formations and therefore makes generalizations about the nature of society in any given area very complex.

It was earlier argued that states and castes emerged out of conquest, that the need to suppress the conquered required the infrastructure of a state. It is now being suggested that environmental and ecological features are crucial to some areas rapidly evolving into states and others remaining isolated. This is sought to be demonstrated in the Indian situation where many parts of central India and of the north-east appear to have been by-passed by the transitions taking place in their vicinity. Whether it was actually so remains to be investigated. Where population pressure is intense and segments of a society cannot break away and migrate to fresh lands establishing clones of the earlier society, there the tensions within the original society can lead to change in the direction of a greater centralization of power and resources and eventually to the emergence of a state.

Essential to this process are other requirements. Improved technology often results in the diversification of an economy and this can now be examined with greater precision with the assistance of archaeology. Attempts are made by groups in society to control both resources and production, a control which may have a ritual backing to begin with but which is ultimately institutionalized in the structure of the state. This may take the form of claims over land and revenue accompanied by using the labour of others to work the land. Or it may focus on urban centres as places of exchange and ultimately of commerce, not altogether unaided by being centres of administration and the collection of revenue. Concentrations of populations also grow around ritual and ceremonial centres. Where the system of authority is undergoing change there the legitimation of this change has to be explicit. Ceremonial centres may embody this legitimizing process in the rituals performed for the bestowal of special powers on particular people.

The hierarchy of stratification in a society, whether it be caste or any other form, is a pre-requisite to the formation of a state. Societies in which identity is traced through birth and kinship or territory and where clan and lineage are fundamental to this identity, gradually give way to other identities such as caste, occupation or community. The meshing together of the latter as a process now comes under the purview of more impersonal factors such as institutions. However the change is neither sudden nor total and often the overlaps continue for long periods.

In this survey of features which point to change I would like to suggest that the earliest markets, urban centres, religious monuments in a region may be seen, among other things, as symbols pointing to the direction in which society has been changing. Equally important as symbols are texts which attempt to record this change. Some do so by taking the most significant indices of the identity of a group and show how these have changed, for example, texts which record the movement of political power from those who claim it ostensibly on the basis of birth and kinship to those who claim it actually through economic and administrative control. Other texts add to this the more obvious symbols of cities, revenue, conquest and temples. Some sources even attempt to hide the antecedents of the ruling family in their efforts to prove their legitimacy as rulers. In the change from clan-based societies to state systems, caste identities play curious roles.

I would like to look at the way in which this change is reflected in two categories of literature. One is the genealogical section—which is referred to as the *vaṃśānucarita*—of the early *Purāṇas*, the *Vāyu*, *Brahmāṇḍa*, *Matsya* and *Viṣṇu*, composed around the fourth-fifth centuries AD. The other is the *vaṃśāvalī* style of writing which occurs both as texts and in inscriptions. As an example of this category I shall be referring to those relating to the Candella dynasty and dating to the tenth century and later.

Historians have generally been sceptical about genealogies and have rightly maintained that they are not to be taken literally, unless there is other evidence to support them. Nevertheless modern studies of genealogies indicate that genealogical patterns can be read as ways of representing society. The social assumptions of a society can be prized out of myth and genealogy, but not necessarily historical events. They assume importance at times of historical change and are often used to legitimize the present. They represent therefore a perspective of the past.

The *vaṃśānucarita* section of the early *Purāṇas* is a record of change from clan-based societies to monarchies and this change is set out in the form of genealogical patterns. The data consist largely of skeletal genealogies with occasionally a story about a member of the descent group. These stories generally occur at major points of change. The material was compiled by bards—the *sūta* and the *māgadha*—and these bards also play an important role in the *Mahābhārata* and the *Rāmāyaṇa*. The material was later taken over, it is thought, by *brāhmaṇa* authors, primarily the Bhṛgu *brāhmaṇas*, and reconstituted in the form of the genealogical section of the *Purāṇa*. Clearly control over this data was linked to controlling some aspects of the legitimacy of those in power. To this extent it parallels the resort to history for purposes of legitimacy by many groups in contemporary times.

The texts are ambivalent regarding their authorship which veers from bards to *brāhmaṇas*, an ambivalence which continues to characterize later *vaṃśāvalīs* as well. The tradition of bards, such as the *chārans* and the *barots*, maintaining the genealogies of land owning families has continued unbroken upto present times. A parallel to this is the *pāṇḍas* at important places of pilgrimage, maintaining the genealogies of the dominant castes of the region. It is not my intention to claim that the descent lists from the *Purāṇas* are historically accurate or reliable, but rather to try and examine the social assumptions implicit in this data and the insights which these provide on the nature of social change.

The genealogical chapter in the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* consists of three sections with distinctly different patterns. The first deals with origins and is ensconced in cosmological time. The second constructs a record of what was perceived as the lineages of ruling clans. These include the families and clans which are the subject of the two epics, the *Rāmāyaṇa* and the *Mahābhārata*. They reflect a clan-based society prior to or in transition to, the formation of states. The third section is a listing of kings and dynasties, pointing to the establishment of the monarchical state. It focuses initially on Magadha in south Bihar and continues upto the period of the Guptas, known from other sources to be reigning in the mid-first millennium AD. I would like to suggest that these three distinctive patterns also reflect a perception of historical change in northern India.

The genealogical pattern begins with the seven Manus who claim descent from the gods and are said to have ruled for long spans of time, but they remain hazy figures. During the period of the seventh Manu there occurs the great Flood, a massive deluge which covers the earth.

The Flood assumes the primary pre-condition of water from out of which known creation arises. It is recognised as a stage in the cycle of time, perhaps what has been called the abolition of profane time, where the Flood is a marker separating a time of origins from later events. The beginnings of history emerge from a condition which has no antecedents. Manu acquires prestige through being chosen to survive. This in turn gives added prestige to those who claim descent from him.

Manu's children become the ancestors to what is described as the succession of *rājās* also referred to as *kṣatriyas*. The precise meaning of the term *rājā* for the earliest times is controversial and there is a debate as to whether it means 'king', as earlier believed, or whether it means 'chief', or 'head of a clan', as seems more likely from the way the genealogies of this section are set out. The genealogical section then proceeds to give the descent groups in long lists of lineages of these *kṣatriyas*.

There are two major descent groups, the Sūryavaṃśa and the Candravaṃśa. The Sūryavaṃśa is said to have descended from the eldest son of Manu, Ikṣvāku and is therefore also referred to as the Aikṣvāka-vaṃśa. The Candravaṃśa claims its ancestry from the female half of the androgynous Iḷā and is therefore also referred to as the Aila-vaṃśa. The use of the planetary symbols of the sun and the moon, would make the point that these were contrasting symbols and this is borne out in the pattern of the genealogical data.

Incidentally, the term *vaṃśa* is derived from the word for bamboo or cane, with each segment growing out of a nodule. However the analogy is limited, for there is no necessary biological link between the segment of the lineages. The *vaṃśānucarita* should therefore be more precisely translated as 'succession lists', although the pattern in which it is set out endorses the claim to its being a genealogy.

The descendants of Ikṣvāku are said to occupy a clearly demarcated geographical area, that of what is now eastern Uttar Pradesh and the middle Ganga plain. The descent is patrilineal, going from eldest son to eldest son and primogeniture is consequently of the utmost importance, an issue which is central in the narrative of the *Rāmāyaṇa*. As an epic, the *Rāmāyaṇa* focuses on the Sūryavaṃśa since both the families of Kosala and Videha belong to this line. The Purāṇic data does not suggest a monarchy and merely lists the descent, terminating fairly soon after the generation of Lava and Kuśa.

The Candravaṃśa is a complete contrast to this. It begins with a female ancestor. It proceeds to record all the male children of each generation and those females who are significant to marriage alliances. The genealogical pattern therefore fans out and includes a vast geographical area covering most of northern India. This was obviously a much later version when there was a familiarity with most of northern India. The segments claim Candravaṃśa descent suggesting that they were groups which had migrated away from parental groups, but they could equally well have been aliens who had been assimilated and therefore included in the lists of descent. Genealogies can be a mechanism for assimilating new groups where they are recorded as descendants but need not be genetically linked. Among the Candravaṃśa the most important lines were those claiming descent from Yadu and from Pūru. Interestingly there was a reversal of primogeniture here where the youngest son, Pūru, inherited the kingdom. Whereas the Ikṣvākus are said by and large to have observed customs approved of by the *brāhmaṇas*, the Ailas on the other hand had many social observances which were outside the rules of the *dharmaśāstras*. For example, in the case of marriage they accepted both polyandrous and cross-cousin marriages as well as bride-price, all of which were frowned upon by the authors of the *dharmaśāstras*. The epic of the Candravaṃśa was the *Mahābhārata* in which such customs are described at greater length.

Diversities in social patterns are important to kinship rights. The absence of homogeneity, even as a later attempt to synthesize the data, suggests the consciousness that an early society may not have observed caste rules, even if its members were called *kṣatriyas*. That these were also being projected as societies without states is evident from the absence of references to state boundaries or the major infrastructure of a state. Rights are asserted over territory by way of birth and this in turn provides status. Genealogies such as these attempt to create a seemingly unbroken past. This is more frequently the case when descent groups are more central than institutions.

The second time-marker in the *vaṃśānucarita* section is the Mahābhārata war, the cataclysmic battle which terminates the existence of most of the clans. The *Purāṇas* refer to it as the end of the splendid *kṣatriya* families. The genealogical pattern gradually changes and there now follows the record of dynasties. The genealogical pattern not only makes the change very evident but also introduces some curious features.

The record now comes to be written in the future tense, a pointer to a disjuncture in the record. In other words these are supposed to be prophecies of the dynasties which will rule. Needless to say the prophecies have to stop by about the fourth century AD, the date when the texts were probably compiled. The earlier descent lists had recorded the succession of *kṣatriya rājās.* This is replaced by the names of dynasties, some of which are familiar to us from other evidence, such as the Nanda, Maurya, Śuṇga, Āndhra, Gupta and so on. There is little information on the dynasties except that each king is mentioned in succession and the number of years that he is said to have ruled are also listed.

Dynasties point to a monarchy and this in turn means a monarchical state. The genealogies therefore are recording a different political and social system from that of the clan-based society of the earlier lists. Dynasties now take precedence over non-state, clan society. Royal power does not derive its legitimacy from birth and kinship. There is no continuous link between the dynasties and no lineage connections. Some dynasties are said to have been the servants of earlier ones, such as the Āndhra-bḥrtyas, perhaps a euphemism for administrative office. What is however clear is that the relations of power are now more important than kinship links.

Kings are referred to in these texts not as *rājās* but as *nṛpas*, literally, the protectors of men. We are also told that kings will arise from families of *kṣatriyas*, mixed castes, *śūdras*, *mlechhas* and foreigners and some amongst them will not observe the *dharma*. Political power was now open and negotiable. Towards the end there is another statement, that eventually a new caste of *kṣatriyas* will be created when those of various *varṇas* and some such as the Pulindas and Śabaras, who are generally listed as forest peoples, will claim *kṣatriya* status. This is an important statement in view of the developments after this period when families of obscure origin, or alternatively, of what today are called tribal groups, did succeed in establishing kingdoms and claiming *kṣatriya* status. It is significant that even if the dynasty is not of *kṣatriya* caste, nevertheless the importance of caste is underlined.

The *vaṃśānucarita* section of the *Purāṇas*, it seems to me, is making a statement. In contrasting the earlier genealogical pattern with the dynastic pattern, the underlying assumption is that there has been a change from what we today would call a tribal society to a caste society with a state system. This change appears to have been of major importance to the authors of the texts. Further, there is a change from *kṣatriya rājās* to non-*kṣatriya* monarchs. Equally significant is the fact that this pattern of genealogies forms a construction of the past and this construction is very different from the narrative which modern historians have put together on the earliest past.

I would now like to turn to the second category of texts, the *vaṃśāvalīs*, literally, the paths of succession. These also reflect directly or implicitly, the change from clan-based to caste society and from non-state societies to state systems. They are frequent in the period from about the tenth century onwards, occurring both as literary texts and in inscription form. It is fortunately possible in many kingdoms to co-relate these texts with inscriptions. This has an added importance given that inscriptions in this period were often the near equivalent of the annals of dynasties in other parts of the world.

There is some continuity between sections of the *Purāṇas* and the *vaṃśāvalīs* since the latter draw on the former for origin myths and genealogical material. However the *vaṃśāvalīs* register a change from skeletal king-lists to continuous narratives. The family which had acquired power and ruled as an independent dynasty backed up this power by seeking legitimacy. This was frequently in the form of an appropriate story of origin often involving the deities and also the claim to being of *kṣatriya* status. When such a claim is made it is clear that caste society has become established in the region over which the family rules. And if earlier, the family had had connections with what we today call tribal people, then it implies the possible transition to caste.

Other features are also apparent. The geographical area earlier associated with the family becomes the initial territory of the state. The dependence on a revenue paying peasantry or on land-owners is either directly recorded or implicitly so in reference to structures which were intended to change the rural economy. Urban centres develop as commercial centres, some coinciding with those which are the nucleus of state administration. Approximation to Sanskritic culture is expressed in various forms. Acculturation not only means the transition to a caste society or the claim to *kṣatriya* caste but also implies the ideology of a new belief system. Religious manifestations change from local deities to the universalizing deities of the Purāṇic pantheon, generally some form of Viṣṇu or Śiva. Association with a religious sect identified with these deities provides a wider network than just the local territory. In fact the *vaṃśāvalīs* indirectly include those features which were traditionally counted as the seven limbs of the state—the king, the territory, the administration, revenue, the capital city now adorned with temples, coercive authority and allies. Most of these attributes of the state are introduced into the narrative in some form.

The author of the *vaṃśāvalī* is a court poet and not a bard, since the text has to be written in a style which conforms to the best literary tradition. The material is often taken from bardic sources and there may well have been some tension between the bards and the court poets. The *vaṃśāvalī* is the official version of the history of the dynasty. It is therefore of some interest to us today to see whether there were variants and what was said in these.

I would like to take as my example of a *vaṃśāvalī*, the Khajuraho inscription of the Candella ruler, Dhaṅga, which dates to AD 953. The inscription in Sanskrit verse records the installation of an image of Viṣṇu in the Lakṣmaṇa temple at Khajuraho by Yaśovarman, but the record was erected during the reign of his son, Dhaṅga. By this time the Candella dynasty was well-established in the heart of Bundelkhand and the narrative in the inscription is an official version of how the ruler of the time wished the dynasty to be perceived.

The inscription begins with an invocation to Viṣṇu and a reference to the creation of the universe, and various Vaiṣṇava *avatāras* and myths, echoing the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa*. The origin myth of the Candella dynasty states that the family was descended from the *ṛṣi* Atri and his son, Candratreya. The latter name, Candratreya, was presumably the origin for the family name of Candella. This is a way of underlining high brahmanical descent as well as trying to explain, admittedly in a rather garbled way, the etymology of the name, Candella. In the larger canvass the family therefore claimed links with the Candravaṃśa line.

The genealogy of the family is then narrated with some detail about each successor. Of Yaśovarman's father named Harṣa, it is said that he married a Chahamāna princess, both being of the same *varṇa*. This is a curious statement, for the Chahamānas were known to be one of the four pre-eminent Rajput families regarded as *kṣatriyas*. This statement therefore is a Candella claim to *kṣatriya* status. The fact that it contradicts their status as surmised from the origin myth, does not seem to have bothered them. It seems to suggest that this marriage gave them a higher status, else it would not have been specially mentioned, yet at the same time they are insisting on their own status as *kṣatriya*.

A longer passage then speaks of the widespread conquests of Yaśovarman, the father of Dhaṅga, which is in the style of the *carita* or biographical literature of the time. He is described as a sword cutting down the creeper of the Gauḍa, the god of death to the Mālava, the bringer of distress on the Cedi and a scorching fire to the Gurjara. The author was evidently using the earlier seventh century biography of Harṣavardhana, the *Harṣacarita* of Bānabhaṭṭa, as a literary model. Yaśovarman's campaign against the Cedis, a powerful group of ruling families in central India, is singled out for detailed mention and has a ring of authenticity distinct from the hyperbolic verses referring to other conquests. Yaśovarman was succeeded by his son Dhanga, and among other details, the boundaries of his kingdom are given.

Mention is also made by the same ruler in another inscription of the construction of a large tank by his father, which was evidently used for irrigation, as were many others built by the Candellas. This would have changed the rural economy of the neighbourhood. The need to generate substantial wealth was a precondition to many activities, not least the splendid temples which were built as a result of Candella patronage.

The purpose of the Khajuraho inscription was to record the installation of an image of Viṣṇu at Khajuraho, the then capital of the Candella dynasty. We are further told that the image was an old and much travelled icon, its provenance being the Himalaya. This was a statement of identity with the Vaiṣṇavite sect and the claim that the image had been brought from so far, hints at the wide geographical network of the sect. That it is to be installed in a temple in the capital city points to the religious associations encouraged by the dynasty. The inscription concludes with a precise date, stating the day, fortnight, month and year in the widely used Vikrama era. All this points to a clear recognition of linear time. The author and the engraver of the inscription are court appointees. This official version is a reconstruction of the past in which the dynasty comes out as having impeccable antecedents and with no hint of associations other than the highest.

But there are other versions which disagree with this version and which suggest that the Candella family may have had a different origin. These versions rely more evidently on bardic sources. Among them is the sixteenth century epic poem, the *Pṛthvirājarāso*, composed by Cand Bardai. This is written in praise of the Cahamānas and since they married into the Candella family, there are references to the latter. But by this time, the two families had witnessed a falling out and the references to the Candella are therefore not very complimentary. We are told that the founder of the dynasty was the illegitimate son of the widowed daughter of a *brāhmaṇa* and the moon-god, Candra, hence the contorted derivation of the name Candella. The young man was an adventurer who fought for control over his village and was ultimately successful. The frequency of the violent wresting of power suggests that acculturation tended to be confrontational.

We are also told that the family worshipped Maniyā Devī, a Gond anionic image which they made into a royal cult. Were they Gonds in origin who were adjusting to Sanskritic culture when they had acquired enough power to declare an independent kingdom? If they were merely associating with local but powerful Gonds it is unlikely that they would have made the worship of Maniyā Devī into the royal cult, for they would surely have had their own claim or family cult. Was the territory of the worship of this deity sought to be incorporated into the area of influence of the dynasty? The acculturation is eventually so complete that there is no mention of Maniyā Devī in the Khajuraho inscription. In terms of social stratification this would be a case of legitimation from below. But at the same time it would seem that the basis of power could well have been the Gond clans.

The association with tribal peoples is not unusual at this time, particularly among those anxiously claiming *kṣatriya* status. Another example is that of the Sisodia Rajputs and the Bhils. The origin myths of and about such dynasties, if analysed, may reveal worthwhile facets on actual origins. The claim to the *varṇa* status of *kṣatriya* rather than a specific *jāti* status could have been a means of enlarging power.

There is yet another version of purely bardic origin and partisan to the Candella. This is the epic poem, the *Ālhākhaṇḍa*, which remained part of the oral tradition until it was recorded in the eighteenth century. The Candella family, ruling a much reduced kingdom, is assumed to be of lower caste than in their inscriptions as they are closely linked to the Āhiras in various ways. The Āhiras although claiming to be Yadu-vaṃśis were nevertheless regarded as lower than the Rajputs in the caste hierarchy. They were cattlekeepers and as such not unfamiliar with raiding. The description of royal activities is not only more realistic but also brings the events down to ground level, as it were.

The much eulogized act of *dig-vijaya*, the supposed conquest of the four quarters is here described as a different matter, namely, that of forcing recalcitrant feudatories and tenants, to pay their dues. The *svayamvara*, the assembly of kings at which a princess was supposed to choose her husband, is here reduced to the capturing of the bride after a brutal conflict between the two families involved in the marriage. The capturing of the bride was, in Brahmanical texts, associated with the *asura* form of marriage, one which was regarded as distinctly low. The story of Pṛthvirāja abducting Samyuktā at her *svayamvara* has overtones of the same idea. If alliances between militarily equal groups were converted into marriage alliances then they could on occasion take the form of raids.

The hero, Ālhā, prays to his titular deity Maniyā Devī for help. We are told that she is now the goddess Śārada and eventually she bestows immortality on the hero. Interestingly, even though she has been transformed into a Sanskritic deity her earlier association is still mentioned in this version.

From the categories of texts which I have discussed, both pertaining to perceptions of the past, certain aspects of the way society functioned are emphasised. After the break-up of clan-based societies, political power it would seem, was open to those who made a bid for it. Success required both the conquest of territory and the incorporation of existing tribal societies. References to the Niṣāda, the Śabara and the Pulinda, the generic names for tribal peoples in Sanskrit sources, which have tended in the past to be generally dismissed, may have to be seen in a new light. It has been argued that segmentary lineages, even without a central authority can function over large areas very effectively. They would therefore have commanded power of no small consequence. Where power was emanating from such groups, there the model of monarchy was accepted and the required cultural changes were made. The change from clan-based to caste-based social organisation was seen as a form of upward mobility, at least by the families of chiefs and those who were claiming *kṣatriya* status. The colonizing of new areas was also a process of reproducing caste society.

In the transition to caste through acculturation, local customary law and religious cults mediated between the stages of clan-based society and its transformation into a state. Should we see this process invariably as what has been called Sanskritisation, or should we not also recognise situations where the reverse may have happened, where a particular form of Purāṇic Hinduism is a concession to local custom and belief. It has been argued that by continuing to support a religious cult of tribal origin, which initially had a relatively large geographical network, the territory of the cult would be incorporated into the territory of the state. This not only complicates the process of state-formation but has much to contribute to a realistic understanding of the evolution of Purāṇic Hinduism.

Large numbers of grants of land were made to *brāhmaṇas* at this time and these acted as the nuclei of Sanskritic culture in many areas. We tend to observe the impact of these entirely from the official versions of the time. But this was not a one-sided acculturation. Nor was it limited to caste and religion alone. If the economic base of a state requires a developed agrarian economy and substantial commerce, then other transformations were also required. Cultivators would have to be converted into tax-paying peasants. Caste in such situations becomes an adjunct to coercion. New identities also demanded a ranking in the new hierarchy. The integration of society through a state system is in many ways different from the integration of clans into larger units. If the families of chiefs were given *kṣatriya* status, how were the rest fitted in? Were there attempts to resist this hierarchy? There is for example, one inscription from central India which refers to the need to suppress the Śabara, Pulinda, and others.

Ultimately the clan identity did not altogether disappear for some aspects remained essential to the basic unit of caste society, the *jāti*. This seems to take on the role of a bridge in the transition to state systems. The identity conferred by birth, kinship, and marriage relations continues. It has been and is a source of major social cohesion or of conflict. The study of the process by which clan-based societies changed into caste societies and the transformation of non-state systems into states, was a slow one and needs to be enquired into in some detail. Such studies would require the utilization of a variety of sources and among them even oral traditions could be helpful. Literature, whether written or oral, when used as a historical source, may not provide what some historians tend to call 'hard facts'. But these sources do illumine our perspectives and our historical assumptions. The categories of texts which I have been speaking of carry the perceptions of the past of their authors and these perceptions frequently indicate contemporary concerns. Analyses of these sources are likely to provide the kind of insights into social history that may enable us to better understand our past and therefore also our present.

Note

* Niharranjan Ray Memorial Lecture, published by Indian Institute of Advanced Studies, Shimla, 1992. Copyright © 1992 by Indian Institute of Advanced Studies. Used with permission.

10

*The Mouse in the Ancestry**

Historians of India have tended to give little credence to the histories of dynasties and regions as described in the *vaṃśāvalīs* dismissing the texts as being of slight consequence. There is however a pattern to the *vaṃśāvalī* literature which needs to be investigated and which suggests that the texts although in part drawing on mythologized accounts of the past, do however provide certain social and political insights which should be of value to the historian. That these patterns recur with frequency in the literature of various parts of the sub-continent is of course partly due to its being a literary genre in the second millennium AD and therefore observing its own rules of structure and form; but in part it also draws on the *itihāsa-purāṇa* tradition which obviously continued to be meaningful and which provided a common fund of origin myths and genealogical links. An illustration of this is the role of the *mūṣaka* (mouse or rat) as a symbol in the origin myths of dynasties as recorded in a number of *vaṃśāvalīs* from geographically unrelated areas.

Most *vaṃśāvalīs* can be fairly clearly demarcated into earlier and later sections. The former draw heavily on traditional material often deriving from Purāṇic sources and the latter reflect historical events suggestive of a more authentic record of what actually happened. The *vaṃśāvalī* of the Himalayan valley of Chamba is a case in point. The gradual but noticeable change of symbols provides indicators in the changing process of those who ruled.

The Chamba *vamśāvalī* claims to be a history of the kingdom of Chamba and has been gathered and collated by modern scholars.[1] The earlier part (vs 1–34) shows a familiarity with Purāṇic sources particularly the *Bhāgavata* and the *Skanda Purāṇas* and describes the origins of the earliest ruling family. The later and major portion of the text is a more reliable account of events connected with the Chamba state. The original compilation dates to about the seventeenth century and was probably put together by a *brāhmaṇa* editor emphasising as it does the grants and donations made to *brāhmaṇas* and the religious underpinnings of the actions of kings.

The dynasty is said to be of the Sūryavaṃśa lineage and the Chamba *vaṃśāvalī* makes the link through a founding ancestor Kuśa, the son of Rāma, but continues the descent to include the Śākyas and Prasenaka (? Prasenajit). The immediate ruling ancestry of the Chamba royal family is traced to Mūṣanavarman, the story of his early life being reminiscent of some other dynastic origin myths. His father, we are told, died as a result of an attack by the Kiras against his kingdom. The pregnant queen, rescued by the ministers as well as the *guru*, gave birth to a posthumous son who was kept in a cave. Later he was taken to a neighbouring kingdom where he was brought up in a style befitting a prince and given a patrimony at the time of his marriage to his benefactor's daughter. Eventually Mūṣanavarman was able to defeat the Kiras and win back his kingdom.

Epigraphic evidence corroborates some of the terms used in the origin myth as related in the *vaṃśāvalī*. There are references to *āditya-vaṃśa* and *moṣūna gotra*.[2] Given the context in which they occur these references also suggest that the claim to monarchical status involved controlling the *sāmantas* or feudatories. The Gum inscription and the later Proli-Ra-Gala inscription make this apparent in the reference to the title of ... *mahārājādhirāja parameśvara* ....[3] The continuing presence of feudatories into the second millennium AD is also indicated by the 'fountain stones', a form of memorial stones characteristic of Chamba. A further inscription links one of the names with Kishkindha which Vogel interprets as a location in Chamba[4] state but which may indicate connections further away. Linguistically the earlier inscriptions display a poor knowledge of Sanskrit and a groping from Prākrit to Sanskrit. The quality of the language and style changes noticeably in the Sarahan *praśasti*[5] composed in the established tradition of Sanskrit lyrical poetry. This also links the royal family to Kishkindha, the link being through a marriage with Somaprabhā, obviously a woman of great political consequence since the *praśasti* is lavish in her praise. Subsequent to this, the inscriptions are frequently records of donations of cultivated land or terraced fields made to *brāhmaṇas* and temples in the main. The format of these inscriptions follows that of the land grants from the kingdoms in the plains of this period. Clearly the Chamba state in the second millennium AD was taking on the form familiar from the established monarchies of northern India.

The earlier inscriptions are issued chiefly from Brahmapura (Brahmor) the first capital of the state. This was a seemingly inaccessible area but in fact well-endowed with terraced fields and lying on the route over the Kukti Pass to Lahul and Zanskar. In the next phase the issuing of royal inscriptions is from Champakā (Chamba) which was the new capital.[6] However, the connections with Brahmapura were not entirely terminated and there was an element of validation in mentioning the earlier capital in some of the inscriptions. Echoes of the *praśasti* style are also evident in phrases such as, 'Sahilla was a rain cloud extinguishing the Kira forces.' It is curious that in the *vaṃśāvalī* it is only after the moving of the capital to Chamba that the origin myth is narrated. Does this reflect a marriage alliance with the *kṣatriyas* of the plains or the migration of the latter to the hill valleys? If it was the latter there is no clear reason to account for such a migration as the reason which is generally given by modern historians, the invasion by the Turks, would not account for such a migration since the reference to the Turuskas is of a later period. Dynastic origin, even in the later phase, is associated with the *āditya-vaṃśa* and the *Mūṣana-gotra*. Legitimation includes the standard formula, ... *deva-dvija-guru-pūjā paripālanam cāturvaṃya vyavasthā* ..., which was in keeping with the best traditions of *rāja-dharma*.

In analysing the myth of origin it is clear that a link was sought with one of the two major lineages, the Sūryavaṃśa or solar lineage and this was characteristic of claims put forward by many *kṣatriyas* of the post-Gupta period who often sought either Sūryavaṃśa or Candravaṃśa ancestry. The former provided associations with the descendants of the Ikṣvākus and the epic hero Rāma, the later *avatāra* of Viṣṇu. All these were impeccable antecedents. However the use of the term *Moṣūna* as a *gotra* name raises another set of questions. In the popular tradition of Chamba this word and its variants *mūṣuṇa/moṣūna* is associated with *mūṣ/mūṣi* and therefore with a mouse. In fact the king Mūṣana is said to have been guarded by mice whilst taking refuge in the cave.[7]

The story of the founder of the family being born posthumously in a cave on the defeat of his father, and the child growing up among people of lesser status and using them to reconquer his father's kingdom in order to reassert his rights, is common to other historical traditions as well.

According to Tod,[8] the Guhilas of Mewar are said to have derived the etymology of their name from Goha/Guha the prince being born posthumously in a cave—*guha*. In this case the prince exploited the friendship of the Bhil tribes to regain his kingdom. It could perhaps be argued that this myth encapsulates a process by which tribal resources were used by adventurers in borderlands to carve out kingdoms for themselves where the term *guha*, meaning a cave or to live in a cave, may have been a generic term for tribal peoples (for example, Guha the Niṣāda in the *Rāmāyaṇa*). Elsewhere it has been argued that the term Guhila means a forest and is to be identified with the area between the Guhila-bala and the river Mahī.[9] The birth of a prince in a cave need not therefore be taken literally but may be an oblique reference to tribal connections. The story of the recapturing of the kingdom was to legitimize the formation of a kingdom and may not have referred to the inheriting of a patrimony in literal terms. But the claim to the territory would be strengthened if it could be described as a patrimony. Further sanction is obtained by the child being reared or cared for by the family of a *brāhmaṇa* or a *guru*. In some cases it is hinted that the original caste of the family was *brāhmaṇa*. Thus, in the Guhila ancestry, the Atpur inscription refers to Guhadatta as *viprakulānandaḥ*.[10]

The theme however is not restricted to northern India. A parallel origin myth comes from Kerala in the eleventh century text of the *Mūṣakavaṃśakāvya* composed by the court poet Aṭula.[11] According to this text, Paraśurāma, having slaughtered all the *kṣatriyas* then discovered that he required one for completing a sacrifice. A prince is produced and it is stated that he is the posthumous son of a *kṣatriya* killed by Paraśurāma, that he is of Haihaya ancestry and that his then pregnant mother was rescued by a *purohita* at the time of the killing of the *kṣatriyas* and was taken to south India for safe-keeping. The child was given birth to in a cave, *guha*. The name Mūṣaka was given to the family because of the appearance of an elephant-sized mouse in the cave just before his birth. The lowly status of the mouse is explained by its being in fact the great Parvatarāja, the lord of the mountains, inadvertently converted into a mouse by the power of a *ṛṣi*. The child was reared by the *purohita*. On the successful completion of the sacrifice by Paraśurāma he bestowed on the child the region of Elimalai in northern Malabar as his kingdom and he was consecrated king by Paraśurāma himself who libated him with jars of water, hence his full name, Rāma-ghaṭa-mūṣaka. (It is curious that the play on the word 'mouse' is maintained in this story since *eli* is the Dravidian term for mouse and *malai* for mountain). The link with the Haihayas locates the ancestry in the Vindhyan region or along the Narbada and therefore the migration southwards has to be explained. A later section of the text clearly refers to Mahiṣmatī as the capital of the Haihayas[12] who are usually listed as a segment of the Candravaṃśa lineage in the Purāṇic sources.[13] In claiming links with the lunar lineage, the *Mūṣakavaṃśakāvya* differs a little from the Chamba *vaṃśāvalī*.

It would seem then that the stereotype of posthumous birth in a cave and an association with a mouse in the founding ancestry were part of a common heritage among some origin myths of families claiming *kṣatriya* status during the second millennium AD. The term Mūṣaka occurs in early sources as the name of an important tribal people[14] and is sometimes also identified with the Musikenoi/Musicanus who opposed Alexander of Macedon when he was campaigning in northern India. Strabo[15] quotes Onescritus in locating the Musicanus in the southernmost part of India. In a later passage however he locates them near Patalene, generally identified with the delta of the Indus and states that they dwelt along the river lands of the Indus. This raises the obvious question of whether a section of the Musicanus migrated from the Indus delta, perhaps along the west coast and settled in the Elimalai area. This would further suggest that the provenance of the origin myth might have been western India and that the people had as their symbol or totem, the mouse. If the identification of Mūṣaka with Musicanus is feasible then they must have been a people of some consequence (as is suggested by the accounts of Alexander's campaigns) and later genealogists would seek links with the name. Or it could be suggested that the bards, who were the keepers of the tradition before it went into the hands of the court poets and the *brāhmaṇas*, had certain stock stereotypes for origin myths and used these indiscriminately, hence the occurrence of parallel stories from areas as far afield as Chamba and Kerala. In the case of Chamba it may be possible to argue that the Guhila tradition had travelled up to the hills with the migration of some Rajput families seeking their fortune in the valleys of the Himalayan foothills and further up. From the inscriptions at Chamba it is clear that the use of terms such as *āditya-vaṃśa* and the Mūṣaka *gotra* are fairly early and if they travelled up from the plains they would date to the post-Gupta period.

It is however worth keeping in mind that the root **mūṣ* can also be used for *mūṣaka*, meaning, a thief and a plunderer. Was the term *mūṣaka* a synonym for clans and families which forcibly seized power or welded lineage based societies into monarchical states in spite of being themselves of uncertain origin? The double meaning of *mūṣaka* would then be the only clue to their less salubrious origins. Such a meaning would strengthen the idea of their being born or raised in a forest cave.

Both the Guhila and Chamba sources make a passing reference to Kishkindha but it remains uncertain whether the reference is to the same place (although unidentified) or to two distinct places both of which can be separately identified one being near Udaipur in Rajasthan and the other in the Curah area of Chamba.[16] In the Chamba inscription it is associated with a marriage where the lady, Somaprabhā, is described as of the house of Kishkindha. That the inscription is substantially a eulogy of the lady in unexpectedly fine Sanskrit may hint at her having come from the plains and having introduced through her presence and her entourage the use of a more literary Sanskrit in Chamba than was usual earlier.[17] Possibly the place-name Kishkindha may also have travelled to Chamba in some such fashion.

Another link between the Guhila tradition as recorded by Tod and the Chamba *vaṃśāvalī* is the role of the *siddha* and of the Tantric cult. In the Guhila story, Bappa, who actually establishes the kingdom is initiated by a Śaiva ascetic, receives his armour from the goddess Bhavānī and at the most crucial point of his career, when making a bid for the control of Chittor, he meets the *yogi* Gorakhanātha, who gives him a double-edged sword.[18] (The anachronism of Gorakhanātha dating to a period after the founding of the Guhila kingdom is ignored). In the rise of the state of Chamba, the Jogi Carpaṭa Nātha plays an important role as the royal advisor. The inclusion *of yogis* as key persons in the story may have derived from the tendency among the record-keepers of the tradition, the genealogists and chroniclers, often being worshippers of the *kuladevas* and the *śaktī* and Tantric cults.[19] Their deities and *gurus* would therefore be involved in the successful establishing of power by the clients of the record keepers. Or alternatively, if the new ruling families had local origins then they may have associated local cult figures with the processes of legitimizing their power. In the case of Chamba the association of the Jogi sect would have been an added support for legitimacy since Tantricism was popular in the foothills of the Himalayas with Mandi and Kangra being major cult centres as also parts of the adjoining plains at Jallandhar, not to mention areas further away such as western Tibet.

There appear to have been two levels of sanction derived from religious systems. With the transfer of the capital from the more remote Brahmapura to the more accessible site of Chamba the sanction seems to have come from the Tantric *siddhas* suggesting that they were the more popular. Sāhilavarman who worked towards establishing a powerful state and founded the city of Champaka, is clearly linked with Tantric *siddhas* who grant him the boon of ten sons. His preceptor was the Jogi Carpaṭa and the founding of the city is associated with the goddess Champāvatī. Sāhilavarman introduces the worship of *liṅgas*, orders the building of a number of temples and also a sanctuary for Carpaṭa to which he himself eventually retires after installing his son as king. The location of Chamba on a plateau overlooking the confluence of the Ravi and the Saho rivers points to the need for a large and more open location easily accessible to the foothills. The site also provided entry points into the main valleys of the region controlled by the feudatory chiefs or *rāṇās*. The establishing of the new capital probably dated to the end of the first millennium AD since the successors of Sahilavarman are referred to in the *Rājataraṅgiṇī* of Kalhaṇa and would date to the eleventh century AD. The religious sanction is extended to include Vaiṣṇavism as Sāhilavarman is also said to have built the important Lakṣmī-Nārāyaṇa temple at Chamba with its special image made of white marble brought from the Vindhyas. A further Vaiṣṇava association is that of a subsequent king Pratāpasiṃhavarman who as a devotee of Viṣṇu wished to build yet another temple but was initially unable to finance it. However, the discovery of a copper mine in Chamba helped to overcome his obstacle.

It would seem that the sanction of the *siddhas* may have been politically insufficient and consequently the further sanction of Vaiṣṇavism was necessary. This perhaps becomes more significant as the powers of the state are further established and the assimilative ability of Vaiṣṇavism becomes an effective agency of social manipulation by the ruling elite. Whatever the personal religious persuasions of a ruler may have been the fact of his giving public expression to them through large-scale financing and monumental structures inevitably draws these persuasions into the social concerns of the state. The influence of Vaiṣṇavism would also have underlined the indenting on the *itihāsa-purāṇa* tradition for links with the conventional roots of *kṣatriya* culture. The claim to Sūryavaṃśa connections by the ruling family would have tied in with the worship of Rāma both as an ancestor of the royal family as well as an *avatāra* of Viṣṇu. Vaiṣṇavism was also in part a reflection of other influences from further away, from the cultural norms and life style of the established kingdoms of the plains. It is significant that the white marble for the image of Lakṣmī-Nārāyaṇa has to come from the Vindhyas. The financial cost of temple building could only be met after the discovery of a copper mine which would point to the heavy financial outlay required in imitating the trappings of the larger states as also using this for purposes of legitimation. It could be argued that the introduction of the Vaiṣṇava sanction was an interpolation into the *vaṃśāvalī* by *brāhmaṇa* editors. That this was not merely a matter of recording a tradition in a *vaṃśāvalī* but reflected the growth of Brahmanical culture in the region is evident from the epigraphical data registering the granting of land to *brāhmaṇas* which becomes a noticeable feature from this point onwards. That much of the land granted was cultivated land also points to the gradual acculturation of the area with nuclei of *brāhmaṇa* settlements. As was common in many of these kingdoms the *brāhmaṇas* were often invited from sacred centres and in one of the copper-plate grants of Vidagda it is stated that the *brāhmaṇa* Nandu came from Kurukṣetra.[20]

Power relations within the state and with neighbouring states are also reflected in the sources. Thus there are references to close links between Chamba and Kashmir which were initially hostile but later became more amicable with a marriage alliance in the eleventh century,[21] a clear indication that Chamba now had high status and an acceptable culture since the 'high culture' of Kashmir dates back to an earlier period. The acculturation of Chamba is also expressed in the changing forms of the 'fountain stones', the memorial stones erected mainly by the families of the *rāṇās*, in memory of and for the merit of, deceased kinsmen. The earlier stones carry traces of local craftsmanship in the style of carving and the use of space. The later stones depict recognizable deities carved in an elaborate style. There is a noticeable refinement and elegance of all that is included on the stone. The epigraphical data further indicates the administration of the state assuming a form similar to that of other areas of northern India. A large range of feudatories are referred to as well as a hierarchy of administrative officials[22] suggesting that the formalities and embellishments of state functioning were now familiar to the state of Chamba. However the significance of the mouse in the ancestry still remains something of an enigma!

Notes and References

* Published in S.D. Joshi (ed.), *Amṛtadhārā*, Prof. R.N. Dandekar Felicitation Volume, Delhi, 1984, 427–34.

1. J.Ph. Vogel, *Antiquities of Chamba State*, Calcutta, 1911, ASI, vol. xxxvi.
2. Laksana Image Inscription at Brahmor, Vogel, *Antiquities of Chamba State*, p. 144; Gum Inscription, p. 146.
3. Vogel, *Antiquities of Chamba State*, pp. 146–8.
4. Svaim Image Inscription, Vogel, *Antiquities of Chamba State*, p. 150.
5. Sarahan *praśasti*, Vogel, *Antiquities of Chamba State*, p. 152.
6. Kulait Copper-Plate Inscription, Vogel, *Antiquities of Chamba State*, p. 182.
7. Vs. 49–61, Vogel, *Antiquities of Chamba State*, pp. 91ff.
8. J. Tod, *Annals and Antiquities of Rajasthan*, Oxford, 1920, vol. 1, pp. 173ff.
9. J.N. Asopa, *Origin of the Rajputs*, Delhi, 1976, pp. 102ff.
10. *Indian Antiquary*, xxxix, p. 191.
11. Gopinatha Rao, 'Extracts from the Mūṣakavaṃśam ...', *Travancore Archaeological Series*, 1916, ii, 1, no. 10, pp. 87–113; M.G.S. Narayanan, 'History from the Mūṣakavaṃśakāvya of Aṭula', *PAIOC*, Jadhavpur, 1969.
12. Rao, 'Extracts from the Mūṣakavaṃśam', section VI.
13. *Viṣṇu Purāṇa*, iv.11; F.E. Pargiter, *The Ancient Indian Historical Tradition*, London, 1922, p. 266.
14. *Mahābhārata*, VI.10.62.
15. Strabo, *Geography*, XV.1, 21 and 33.
16. Vogel, *Antiquities of Chamba State*, pp. 180–5.
17. Vogel, *Antiquities of Chamba State*, p. 152.
18. Tod, *Annals and Antiquities of Rajasthan*, pp. 180–5.
19. Cf. N.P. Zeigler, 'Marwari Historical Chronicles ...', *IESHR*, 1979, xiii, no. 2, pp. 319–52.
20. Vogel, *Antiquities of Chamba State*, pp. 255ff.
21. Kalhaṇa, *Rājataraṅgiṇī*, VII.218; 58.
22. Vogel, *Antiquities of Chamba State*, pp. 120ff.

11

*The Image of the Barbarian in Early India**

'Barbarians' are part of the make up of all early civilisations. It was the way a civilisation demarcated itself from those that were seen as distinctively different. The identification of the barbarian would also change over time. Sometimes the earlier barbarians moved to the core of a culture and were replaced by newer ones. The identification therefore was not invariably a permanent one. Consequently the characteristics of what constituted a barbarian could vary from one civilisation to another or from one period to another within the same civilisation.

The concept of the barbarian in early India arises out of the curious situation of the arrival of Indo-Aryan-speaking pastoralists in northern India who came into contact with the indigenous population (some of whom were the remnants of the urban civilization of the Indus) and regarded them as barbarians. The earliest distinction made by the Aryan speakers was a linguistic and cultural distinction. The Indo-Aryan speakers spoke Sanskrit whereas the indigenous peoples probably spoke Proto-Dravidian and Muṇḍā. However the distinction was not one of binary opposition—in fact it admitted to many nuances and degrees of variation, hence the complication of trying to trace the history of the concept. The distinction was rarely clearly manifest and based either on language, ethnic origins or culture. Political status, ritual status and economic power, all tended to blur the contours of the distinction. Added to this has been the confusion introduced by those who tend to identify language with race and who thereby see all speakers of Sanskrit as members of that nineteenth-century myth, the Aryan race.[1]

The Aryans,[2] although unfamiliar with city civilization, did use the central Asian horse and the light, spoke-wheeled chariot which gave them speed and mobility and a military advantage over the people still using ox-drawn carts. Furthermore it is also possible that the Aryans may have assisted in the diffusion of iron technology which again was superior to the existing copper technology. It is likely that the cities of the Harappa culture had already declined or at least were in the final stages of decline when the Aryan speakers arrived as migrants. They were virtually faced therefore with a series of chalcolithic cultures extending from the Indus valley to Rajasthan and across into the Ganga valley. Their association with new technologies would probably explain why the Indo-Aryan language spread through a major part of northern India.[3] The anomaly of pastoralists referring to the inheritors of a high civilization as barbarians can thus be partially explained.

The word most frequently used in Sanskrit to describe the barbarian is *mleccha*. Attempts have been made to derive the etymology of the word from the root *vāc* speech, hence one who is not familiar with the known speech or is of alien speech.[4] This also provides a clue to the early distinction being based on speech which fact is stressed in late works as well.[5] The etymology however is false as *mleccha* represents a cultural event rather than a linguistic fact. It has been suggested that *mleccha* may have been derived from Me-luh-ha, the Sumerian name for an eastern land with which the Sumerians had trading relations, possibly the people of the Indus civilization.[6] The Pāli word for *mleccha* is *milakkha*, which relates perhaps to the Sumerian version.[7] Buddhist sources explain *milakkha* as referring to the Āndhra, Tamil, etc.[8] This is further substantiated by the *Dharmaśāstra* of Jaimini in which he mentions certain *mleccha* words which are Sanskritized versions of words occurring in the Dravidian languages. Thus the etymology of *mleccha* would relate it to the indigenous inhabitants of northern India at the time of the arrival of the Aryan-speaking peoples, a far more plausible derivation than the earlier one. Another attempt derives *mleccha* from the proto-Tibetan **mltse* meaning 'tongue' and the Kukish *mlei*. This would associate the early use of the word with the non-Aryan speaking peoples living close to the Tibeto-Burman area.[9]

Mleccha may have been an onomatopoeic sound imitating the harshness of an alien tongue. Retroflex consonants are believed to have been assimilated into Indo-Aryan from Dravidian. The earliest of the better-known grammarians, Pāṇini, gives a form of the word *mliṣṭa* as 'that which is spoken indistinctly or barbarously' and treats it in its noun form as indistinct speech or a foreign language.[10] Used as a noun, the word also has the rather significant association with copper and copper-coloured. This may have had some connection with the Aryan speakers coinciding with the use of iron in Indian cultures erstwhile based on a copper technology.[11] From the early centuries AD onwards the adjectival use of *mleccha* becomes quite frequent.[12]

The gradual emphasis on speech differentiation is apparent in the use of another range of words for barbarians which are clearly onomatopoeic and indicate an incomprehension of the language concerned; words such as *barbara, marmara* and *sarsara*. The first may well be borrowed from the Greek *barabaos*, since it occurs in late works in Sanskrit and refers to people of the north who are said to be sinful, low and barbarous.[13] The word also occurs in Pāli as *babbhara* and means 'people of an unknown tongue'.[14] Further variants in Sanskrit are *bhara-bhara* and *balbala-karoti*, 'to stammer or stutter'. *Marmara* and *sarsara* carry the same meaning and are intended to convey the sounds of a halting and alien speech.

In the *Ṛg Veda*, the earliest of the Vedic texts, there is no mention of the *mleccha* as such but there are references to the Dāsa or the Dasyu, the local peoples who were subordinated and regarded as alien and barbaric. They are compared with demons, with one reference to being black-skinned (*kṛṣṇa-tvach*) and snub-nosed, speaking a strange language or speaking incorrectly (*mṛdhra-vāc*); they practise black-magic and do not perform the required sacrifices; they are treacherous and they live in fortified habitations.[15] The distinction of language and ritual is more frequent than physical appearance. Society is divided into two main groups, the *ārya-varṇa* and the *dāsa-varṇa*[16] suggesting a rather simple division into 'us' and 'them' where political success justifies the superiority of the former over the latter.

That speech was the chief component in distinguishing the Aryan from the others is clearly indicated in a text from the Later Vedic literature. An example of barbarian speech, that of the *Asuras*, is quoted in the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*[17] and is later quoted and discussed by a grammarian of the second century AD, Patañjali.[18] It is evident from the example that the barbarian speech in this case was a Prākrit dialect of eastern India.[19] This would also suggest that settlements in the middle Ganga valley noticed the difference in speech which was recorded and examined.

The emphasis on language was important as the knowledge of correct Sanskrit was crucial to the notion of being an *ārya*, and to the efficacy of the ritual hymns.

Having established a distinction in language, a demarcation was also made with regard to territory. Those areas where a *mleccha bhāṣā* (language) was spoken came to be regarded as the *mleccha deśa* or country of the *mleccha*, and this in theory at any rate, was clearly cordoned off.[20] The *mleccha* areas were impure lands not only because those who lived there spoke an alien language but what was more important they did not perform the correct rituals. These were lands where the *śrāddha* ceremony (offerings to ancestors on stipulated occasions) was not carried out, and where people did not observe the laws of *varṇa*. The pure land was *āryāvarta*,[21] traditionally the region inhabited by the *āryas*, all else was *mleccha-deśa*. Since the *mleccha* is ritually impure, *āryas* visiting the lands of the *mleccha* must perform *prāyaścitta* or expiatory rites before they can be regarded as cleansed and fit for normal association again.[22] The concept of ritual impurity relates to the functioning of caste and this particular aspect of the image of the barbarian appears to be unique to early Indian culture. It was this dichotomy of purity-impurity which gave added significance to the role and status of the ritually pure—the *ārya* and pre-eminent amongst the *āryas*, the *brāhmaṇa*. If *mleccha* epitomizes the barbarian, then *ārya* includes all that is noble and civilized. It is doubtful that the term *ārya* was ever used in a racial sense. In Sanskrit and Pāli literature it is primarily a descriptive term or an honorific referring to a respectable and honourable man.[23] Ritual purity or its absence was used not to justify aggression against the barbarian, but to justify the laws of exclusion on the part of the *ārya*.

The perspective from the south was rather different. The barbarian was defined as one whose language was incomprehensible. The *ārya* was more often merely the northerner and the word was sometimes used synonymously for Vaḍavar, also a person from the north.[24] Later *ārya* was used in the sense of a noble, respected person. Curiously enough, one of the synonyms given for *ārya* in certain Tamil lexicons is *mleccha*, and it is used for those who cannot speak Tamil, separating them from the northerners—tribes such as the Vaḍavara and the Malavar who live in the forests as hunters and who rob travellers and also steal cattle from the neighbouring settlements. Their language is alien and they use long and unlearned words. Beyond them lies Danḍakāranya (in the northeastern

Deccan) which is part of *ārya-deśa*. This attitude compares favourably with modern tribes of the Chota Nagpur region who refer to the neighbouring aryanized Hindus (non-tribals) as *diku*, meaning foreigners, a word which was used to great effect in recent years in the building up of an ādivāsi political movement, which sought to exclude the neighbours.

The relationship between the *mleccha* and the *ārya* was conditioned by all the different facets which went into the making of a caste society. There was, first, a network of exogamous and endogamous kinship relations (*jāti*); second, a hierarchical ordering of occupations and a division of labour which functioned on the basis of service relationships. The third essential was the notion that every social group has a ritual status determined by the degree to which its occupation is clean or polluting. The ritual status need not coincide with the actual socio-economic status. It can be maintained that ritual status is expressed in the notion of *varṇa* with its four categories of *brāhmaṇa* (priest), *kṣatriya* (warrior), *vaiśya* (trader), and *śūdra* (cultivator). But for the purposes of the actual functioning of society, *jāti* (deriving from 'birth') was the more significant unit. Fourth, each group was associated with a geographical location. The *mleccha* had to respond to each of these facets. Kinship relations were excluded and the *mleccha* therefore formed their own *mleccha jātis*. No self-respecting *ārya* would marry into a *mleccha* family. Where the *mlecchas* in question were technologically inferior, their occupation was low and this affected their ritual status which was heavily weighted on the side of impurity and therefore low. Consistency with regard to geographical location is evident from the long periods of designating particular regions as *mleccha-deśa*.

Theoretically this seems to be a fairly clear situation. But in fact there were not only lapses from the theory but rarely did society function in strict accordance with these rules although the façade of the rules was maintained. This has to be kept in mind when seeking information from the sources. Whereas the *Dharmaśastras*, being legal treatises and social codes, maintain the theory and much of religious Brahmanical literature tries to conform to the theory, the non-brahmanical literature, particularly secular literature, and epigraphic evidence provide pointers to the actual situation.

By the latter half of the first millennium BC the picture had become far more complex. The amalgamation of existing local cultures, which was inevitable in the evolution of the culture of the *ārya*, created problems for the theorists of caste society. Not all social groups could be given a precise *varṇa* status. The process of *anuloma* (hypergamy) and *pratiloma* (where the mother is of a higher caste than the father) had to be conceded and a number of new and, inevitably, mixed castes (*saṃkīrṇa jāti*) were admitted to the theory of social order.[25] They were given the rank of *śūdras*. Of these many came to be described as *mleccha* such as the Āmbaṣṭha, Ugra and Nisadha among the *anuloma*[26] and the Sūta, Māgadha, Caṅḍāla, Ayogava and Pulkasa among the *pratiloma*.[27] Even within the *sankīrṇa jātis* there is a hierarchy of ranking as recorded in the *Dharmaśāstras*.[28] Professionally they followed occupations which were regarded by the theorists as activities associated with unclean tasks such as washermen, fishermen, potters, leather-workers, iron-smiths, basket-makers, hunters and scavengers.

That the members of the *saṃkīrṇa jātis* did not necessarily in fact have a low social status is indicated by the sources. The *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa* mentions an Āmbaṣṭha king.[29] The *Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa* refers to the material well-being of the Ugras, one of whom is mentioned as a king's officer.[30] Similarly the *sūta* and the *māgadha* were traditionally the bards and the chroniclers, in fact the preservers of the early Indian historical tradition. They were close to the king not only because of their profession, but we are told that the presence of the *sūta* was essential to one of the rites in a royal sacrifice.[31] In contrast the case of the Caṇḍālas is exceptional, the emphasis being on impurity and not on a difference in culture. They were regarded as so polluting that they had to live outside the village or town.[32]

One of the most interesting and yet at the same time ambiguous cases of the classification of a people as near-*mleccha* is that of the *vrātyas*. Vedic sources on the *vrātyas* appear confused as to their exact status.[33] Later legal literature uses the word *vrātya* in the sense of 'degenerate'.[34] According to Vedic literature the *vrātyas* were not Brahmanical in culture and had a different language; but they did speak the language of the initiated. Yet the *vrātyas* were not dismissed as *mleccha* and considerable efforts were made to try to circumvent this problem, one of them being the famous ritual of the *vrātya-stoma*, the rite by which the *vrātya* was purified and accepted into Aryan society.[35] Clearly the *vrātyas* were a powerful group whose power seems to have emanated from a religious sanction and who were therefore treated with a barely disguised veneration by the authors of the *Atharvaveda*, but with some condescension by the authors of the *Dharmaśāstras*.

The second half of the first millennium BC was also the period which saw the gradual but extensive urbanization of the Ganga valley. The river itself became the main channel of communication and trade with cities rising on its banks. The agrarian settlements had also tended to lie closer to the river. There were still large areas of uncleared forest, especially nearer the hills where the agrarian economy had not reached. It was now possible for the Aryan speakers to assume the role of the advanced urban civilization based on technological and economic sophistication. They could therefore regard with contempt those living in the forests who had remained at the food-gathering and hunting stage. Such technologically backward people as for example the Śabara, Pulinda, Mutība and Kirāta, constituted yet another category which came to be included in the term *mleccha*.[36] The distinction which is made in the epic *Rāmāyaṇa* between the urban culture of the kingdom of Ayodhyā based on a fairly extensive agricultural economy can be contrasted with the hunting and food-gathering culture of the enemies of Rāma, the *rākṣasa* peoples.[37] Very often the latter inhabited the fringes of the agrarian settlements and had to move up into the hills with the gradual expansion of the agrarian economy. By extension therefore those on the frontiers also came to be called *mleccha*, even in cases such as those of the Yavanas and the Kāmbojas who were on par with the *ārya*.[38] Thus the use of the word *mleccha* had now been extended to include speakers of an alien language, social groups ranked as mixed castes, technologically backward peoples and along the frontiers.

The stabilizing of what was to be the *āryāvarta* and the *mleccha* lands took some time. In the *Ṛg Veda* the geographical focus was the *sapta-sindhu* (the Indus valley and the Punjab) with Sarasvatī as the sacred river, but within a few centuries *āryāvarta* is located in the Ganga–Yamuna Doāb with the Ganga becoming the sacred river. Together with the shift eastwards of 'the pure land' the northern Punjab and the trans-Indus region came to be regarded as *mleccha-deśa*. Later Vedic literature speaks of the western Ānava tribes as *mlecchas* and occupying northern Punjab, Sind and eastern Rajasthan, as also the eastern Ānava tribes occupying parts of Bihar, Bengal and Orissa.[39] The peoples of the north were *mleccha* either because they were located on the frontier such as the Gandhāra and Kāmboja and therefore both their speech and culture had become contaminated and differed from that of *āryāvarta*, or else, as in the case of the Madras, they were once *āryas* but having forsaken the rituals were relegated to *mleccha* status. The latter was obviously an attempt to explain the contradiction of the earlier texts mentioning them as *āryas* and the later texts, written when the *āryāvarta* had shifted eastwards, referring to them as *mlecchas*.

That the northern region was once the land of 'the pure speech' is stated with reference to the Udicya (northern region) where peoples such as the Uttarakurus and the Kuru-Pañcālas are held up as the model in speech and it is recommended that *brāhmaṇas* be sent there to learn the language.[40] Buddhist literature describes Uttarakuru as a mythical paradise, a land reminiscent of the Utopian past when there were no institutions such as private property and the family and when there was no need to work because food was available from the trees and all man's desires were satisfied.[41] The later Purāṇic tradition echoes this description for we are told that the land is covered with milk trees which eliminate the need for cultivating food, that the women are beautiful like the *apsarās* (celestial nymphs) and that people are born as couples, presumably thereby intensifying sexual pleasure.[42] Possibly the Brahmanical conception of Uttarakuru as the land of the purest speech may have symbolized the Brahmanical Utopia, a land of non-polluting peoples, observing all the required rituals and speaking the purest language. Not surprisingly, of the inhabitants of *āryāvarta* by far the most significant are the Kuru-Pañcāla.[43] They emerge as a confederation of a number of existing tribes earlier associated through war and matrimonial alliances.

The Himalayan region was largely *mleccha-deśa* since it was not only a border region but was mainly inhabited by Tibeto-Mongoloid people and the dissimilarity of language and culture would be indicative of difference. The other mountainous region, that of the Vindhyas and their extensions, is probably the most interesting from the point of view of geo-politics. The Aravalli hills formed the natural watershed between the Indus and Ganga valleys and this would be the natural frontier region between the two valleys. For a long period up to the early centuries AD it was occupied by non-Aryan tribal republics, which survived the general decline of republics in the valley areas, and which were consequently the frontier for the Ganga valley. The central Indian complex of the Vindhya and Satpura ranges with the rivers Narmada, Tapti and Wainganga cutting through them and the plateau areas of Chhota Nagpur and Chhattisgarh to the east have formed throughout Indian history an ideal setting for the tribal peoples. This area lent itself easily to a pastoral and food-gathering economy with the possibilities of agriculture in some parts of the river valleys and the rich agricultural areas in the plains being more distanced. With the expansion of agriculture and the clearing of the forest in the Ganga valley the existing population of the valley may have sought refuge in the central Indian highlands. Up to about the middle of the first millennium AD the Vindhyan tribes lived in comparative isolation totally unconcerned with the *mleccha* status conferred upon them by the *āryas*. The Chambal and Narmada valleys being the main route from the urban centres of the Ganga valley to the western ports (e.g. Bhrighukaccha, modern Broach) and the Deccan, the plundering of trading caravans and travellers may well have provided the tribes with extra comforts. Plundering was always a means of livelihood which they could resort to, especially during periods of political disturbance. It is not until the post AD 500 period that they begin to participate in the politics of both northern and southern India.

The settlement of eastern India is attested to by advanced Neolithic cultures and the Chalcolithic copper hoards in Bihar and Bengal.[44] Literary evidence dating to about the middle of the first millennium BC indicates that the people of these areas spoke a non-Aryan language. The initial boundary of control in the Ganga valley is perhaps referred to in a striking story related about Videgha Māthava, the *rājā* of the Videhas, who is said to have travelled with the god of fire, Agni, across the Ganga valley as far as the river Sadānīra. Here he paused as the land to the east of the river had not been sanctified by Agni. Once this was done he established the Videha people on the other bank and the lands to the east of the Videhas were the *mleccha-deśa*.[45]

Yet it was the *mleccha-deśa* close to Videha, Magadha, which was to play a leading role in Indian history during the subsequent centuries. Magadha is described as the accursed land with a people of mixed caste status. An expiatory rite is required from those who visit it and this injunction is continuously repeated in the *Dharmaśāstras* for many centuries, right through the period when the state of Magadha was the centre of empires and powerful kingdoms, viz., the Maurya and Gupta.[46] The other eastern peoples, those of Aṅga, Vaṅga and Kaliṅga were even more polluting and required more elaborate expiatory rites.[47]

This was not the attitude however among the Jainas and Buddhists since it was in these areas that the heterodox religions first gained ground, as for example, Aṅga, which was an early centre of Jainism. The Jaina texts clearly define the *milakkhu* as the Varvara, Sarvara and Pulinda tribes and discourage monks and nuns from keeping their company.[48] Buddhist sources make no distinction between *ārya* lands and *mleccha* lands when describing the sixteen major states of northern India. Since the Buddha himself preached in Māgadhan Prākrit he would hardly have accepted the term *mleccha* for the people of the region. A late Buddhist work mentions the Magadha *bhāṣā* as the speech of the *āryas* indicating that Sanskrit did finally come to be accepted in Magadha.[49] The word *milakkha* is used in Buddhist writing, and as we have seen, one very reliable definition of it reads *Andha Damil, ādi*, Āndhras, Tamils, etc.; i.e. the people of the peninsula.[50] *Milakkha* is also used to describe those *āryas* who had lost their status and the Kāmboja are quoted as an example;[51] also, foreigners such as the Yavanas or Yonas whose status was high but who spoke an alien language,[52] and finally the tribes of the jungle, such as the Pulinda and Kirāta, where they are not only less civilized but again their language is incomprehensible.[53] It would seem from the Buddhist sources that language was the most important criterion of differentiation. Ritual impurity was not a major item in Buddhist thought, thus discrimination was not as severe as in Brahmanical writing.[54] The Buddhists tended to underplay the *mleccha* consciousness probably because of the Buddhist association with the *mleccha* regions, these being the areas where it gained most ground. Nevertheless even powerful rulers motivated by the Buddhist ethic such as the Mauryan emperor Aśoka (third century BC) could not disregard the differentiation. His list of the tribal peoples in his empire recorded in one of his inscriptions agrees closely with the lists of *mleccha* peoples mentioned in other sources, although he does not actually call them *mleccha*.[55]

Aśoka makes a distinction between the tribal peoples and the forest tribes, the latter having to be wooed by his officers in the context of a paternalistic policy where he projects himself in the image of the father and his subjects as his children. It would seem that the forest tribes did not easily reconcile themselves to law and order.[56] The tribal people were those that had a clan organisation and were generally societies without a state system. The same problem is reflected in the *Arthaśāstra*, the treatise on political economy ascribed to Kauṭilya, the minister of Aśoka's grandfather (fourth century BC). Kauṭilya also distinguishes between the *mleccha* and the forest tribes (*āranyacāraḥ, āṭavikaḥ*). He recognizes the political advantages to be gained from keeping the forest tribes happy since they had their own strongholds and could be used effectively in campaigns. Furthermore it was necessary to pay them off from time to time to prevent their resorting to plundering and pillaging.[57] Another source of the same period, the *Indika* of Megasthenes, the Seleucid ambassador to the Mauryan court, refers to the Indians as surrounded by barbarian tribes, possibly a reference to *āryāvarta* surrounded by the *mleccha-deśa*. Megasthenes adds that all these tribes were indigenous but that they differed in mind and disposition from the Indians.[58]

Although Megasthenes does not describe the Indians as barbarians, the Indians undoubtedly regarded him as a *mleccha*. For the Indians, the Greeks on every count were *mlecchas*. They were referred to by the term Yavana, a back-formation from the Prākrit *yona*, and the Old Persian *yauna*, which is said to derive from Ionia, suggesting that the Ionian Greeks were the earliest to have come into contact with Persia and India. Indian tradition however maintains that the Yavanas originated from Turvaśu, the son of Yayāti, associated with one of the very early clans of northern India.[59] But this may well be a late attempt to find the Greeks a respectable ancestry when their role in the history of northern India became more than marginal. For the Bactrian Greeks (or the Indo-Greeks as they are called in Indian history), the Śakas (Scythians) and Kuṣāṇas aggravated the problem of having to concede the existence of *mleccha* rulers. In spite of the dismal prophecies of the ancient seers that the Kaliyuga (the last of the four ages) would initiate the rule of the low-caste, nevertheless the *mleccha* origin of these rulers had to be faced.[60] The problem was further complicated by the fact that these rulers patronized and used Sanskrit as is evident from their inscriptions and coins and they inter-married with the local ruling families. The description of these areas as *mleccha deśa* was technically also problematical. The inscriptions of the Śaka satraps (rulers and governors of western India from *c.* 100 BC to AD 300) are not only composed in good literary Sanskrit, but also assert with much vehemence that the kings are doing their utmost to prevent the mixing of the castes and are protecting the law of *varṇa*.[61] Thus the two main criteria of barbarism could not theoretically be said to prevail.

The *mleccha* both indigenous and foreign had acquired political power and a new concept was necessary. It was probably largely to circumvent this problem that the term *vrātya kṣatriya* (degenerate *kṣatriya*) became current in describing the origin and status of such peoples. It was maintained that in origin they were of the *kṣatriya varṇa* and that their degeneration was due to the nonperformance of sacred rites, or because of the wrath of the *brāhmaṇas* when they ceased to perform the sacred rites.[62] Among the foreign rulers included as *vrātya kṣatriyas* were the Yavanas and the Śakas (Scythians).

The term Yavana was gradually extended to include not only the local Greeks but any group of people coming from west Asia or the eastern Mediterranean. Much the same was to happen to the term Śaka with reference to central Asia, but Yavana remained the more commonly used one. Even in South India, traders from Rome and later the Arabs were called Yavanas. Early Tamil literature has descriptions of a Yavana settlement in Kaveripaṭṭinam. The Yavanas here referred to were also described as *mleccha*, since they spoke an alien language which was so incomprehensible that it sounded as if their tongues were cut off.[63]

Among the tribes of indigenous origin also referred to as *vrātya kṣatriyas* in some sources are listed the Drāviḍa, Ābhīra, Śabara, Kirāta, Mālava, Śibi, Trigarta and Yaudheya. The majority of such tribes tended to be the inhabitants of the Himalayan and Vindhyan region, traditionally called the *mleccha-deśa*. There is evidence from numismatic sources of the increasing political importance of some of these tribes which would explain their elevation to the status of *vrātya kṣatriyas* from being plain *mlecchas*. The period from the first century BC to about the fourth century AD saw the rise of a number of oligarchies in the Punjab and eastern Rajasthan, in fact in and around the watershed between the Indus and Ganga valleys. The Mālava tribe, mentioned by the Greeks as the Malloi, established themselves in the Jaipur area having migrated from the Rāvi.[64] The Śibi, the Siboi of the Greeks, migrated to north-eastern Rajasthan.[65] The Trigarta were settled in the Rāvi–Sutlej Doāb. The Yaudheyas moved from Haryana northwards.[66] The fact that these tribes were politically powerful after they had settled in an area is clear from the use of the term *janapada* in the coin legends indicating their assertion over the territory on which they had settled. The Gupta conqueror Samudragupta, campaigning in the fourth century AD, takes great pride in having destroyed the tribal polities which were regarded as poweful.[67] The coin legends also clearly demonstrate that these tribal peoples were now using Sanskrit.

In the middle of the first millennium AD when it was evident that *mleccha* dynasties were dominating politics, the Purāṇic tradition (as it was then recorded) had much to say on the problem of the *mleccha*.[68] There is a general bewailing of the increase in *mleccha* influence which is associated with the prophecy that the *kaliyuga* will see *mleccha* dominance.[69] This will result in the establishment of the *mleccha dharma*, a barbarous ordering of the universe when vice will be rampant, the authority of the sacred texts neglected, the *śūdras* respected—in short, a complete reversal of the world order as seen by the *āryas*.[70] Passages such as these seem to express the sentiments of a small group fighting to preserve itself and prevent the change which is engulfing its world and its very existence. Not surprisingly the idea of the Saviour Deity is introduced in some of the *Purāṇas* where it is stated that the god Viṣṇu in his tenth incarnation as Kalkin will ride through the world in an attempt to turn men back to the path of virtue. Some of the *mleccha* peoples such as the Drāviḍa, Śabara and Vṛṣala will be destroyed by Kalkin.[71] But this was a temporary measure as Purāṇic cosmology did not really envisage the coming of the millennium since ultimately the entire universe was to be destroyed at the finale of the *kaliyuga*.

It is curious that in spite of considerably increased communication between the Ganga valley and the peninsula and the spread of Sanskrit and of Aryan culture to the south, there is a persistence in regarding the southern regions as *mleccha-deśa*. The Āndhras, for example, who had ruled the northern Deccan for four centuries, are described as *mleccha* kings and their lands unfit for the *śrāddha* ceremony. At the same time the Āndhra kings were claiming to be the protectors of the *varṇa dharma*, and the destroyers of the Śakas and Yavanas.[72] That less concession was made to the southern kings as compared to the northern kings was partly due to distance and partly perhaps due to the belt of tribes inhabiting the Vindhyas who doubtless acted as a barrier.

However the attitude towards even these tribes was beginning to change and this is reflected partially in the genesis myths associated with their origin. The most frequently referred to are the Niṣāda. References to the four *varṇas* in Vedic literature includes mention of the Niṣāda who appear to have been a non-Aryan tribe who were not assimilated[73] but had a low status in ritual ranking.[74] They are generally located in the region of the Narmada river or among the Vindhya and Satpura mountains.[75] They are described as being dark-skinned, flat-featured with blood-shot eyes and of short stature.[76] A series of myths is related regarding their origin.[77] The variations apart, the main narrative states that they were born from the thigh of king Veṇa. King Veṇa was extremely wicked and flouted the sacred laws and the holy rites. This infuriated the sages who pierced him with the sharp ears of the *kuśa* grass and, according to some versions, killed him. In order to avoid anarchy, since the land was now without a king, they churned his left thigh and from it came a dark, ugly, short man, the ancestor of the Niṣāda, and in some versions, the ancestor of the *mleccha*.[78] Being unsatisfied with this result they then churned the right arm of Veṇa and from it emerged Pṛthu who was crowned king and was so righteous that the earth was named after him, Pṛthivi. Whatever the deeper meaning of these myths may be, it seems obvious that the original Niṣāda and Pṛthu represent two factions which may have fought for power. There also seems to be an association of guilt with the killing of Veṇa and the manner of the birth of Niṣāda suggests that he may have been the rightful heir but was replaced by Pṛthu. The tribes with whom the Niṣāda are associated in these texts such as the Bhīla, Kol, etc., are often the tribes connected with the rise of new dynasties in central India in the period after the eighth century AD.

The Vindhyan region was the locale for the three tribes which came to be mentioned almost as the synonyms for *mleccha*, the Kirāta, Pulinda and Śabara.[79] The Kirāta are described as living in the hills and jungles of Magadha.[80] The *Mahābhārata* describes them as being dressed in skins, eating fruit and roots and inflicting cruel wounds with their weapons. Yet they were not as wild as the text would have us believe because they also brought as gifts to one of the heroes, sandalwood, aloes wood, expensive skins, gold, perfume, rare animals and birds and ten thousand serving girls. They arrived riding on elephants.[81] If the gifts amounted to even a portion of what is described then the Kirātas cannot be said to have had a primitive economy. Early texts speak of them as living in the east but later texts give the Vindhyas as their place of residence.[82] Their migration may have been due to the expansion of the agrarian settlements in the Ganga valley. The most interesting reference to them however is the famous literary work, the *Kirātārjunīya* where significantly the Kirāta is identified with the god Śiva and gives battle to Arjuna, one of the heroes of the *Mahābhārata*.[83] South Indian sources as late as the seventeenth century continue to refer to them as living in the Vindhyas in a semi-barbarous condition.[84]

The names Pulinda and Śabara in particular seem to have become generic names for barbarian tribes.[85] Ptolemy uses the curious expression 'agriophagoi', the eaters of wild things,[86] in describing the Pulinda, and locates them to the east of the Malava. The Pulinda may have migrated from the Mathura region to the Vindhyas for the same reasons as did the Kirātas.[87] They too are described as being dwarf-sized, black in complexion like burnt tree-trunks and living in forest caves.[88] The Śabaras were also located in the Vindhyan region.[89] A ninth-century inscription mentions the *mleccha* along the Chambal river and a fifteenth-century inscription refers to the quelling of a revolt by the Śabaras inhabiting the Chambal valley.[90] An early medieval adaptation of the *Rāmāyaṇa* from the south speaks of the Śabara chief as a powerful ruler of *mleccha-deśa*.[91] It is not clear whether this is poetic imagination or whether it reflects a real impression of the Śabaras as seen from a south Indian perspective. As late as the sixteenth century the king Kṛṣṇa Deva Raya of Vijayanagara writes in his manual on government that the Vindhyan tribes must be brought round to accepting the administration by gaining their trust,[92] a sentiment reminiscent of the emperor Aśoka. A Śabara tribe exists to the present day in western Orissa. The Kol tribes preserve a traditional memory of the name Śabara and the Sabari river in Chhattisgarh reflects an association with these tribes.

The authors of the *Dharmaśāstras* continued to prescribe dire punishments for those who travelled in *mleccha* lands, yet this did not deter people. Needless to say Indian traders (*brāhmaṇas* included) did travel extensively and profitably in *mleccha* lands, the performance of the expiatory *prāyaścitta* on returning home providing a convenient solution to the problem.[93] However with the incursions of *mleccha* rulers into *āryāvarta* itself, a new problem arose: the pure land was being turned into a *mleccha* land. This had happened in the case of the Yavanas who had come a fair way into the Ganga–Yamuna Doāb. It was to happen again with the coming of the Central Asian Huns or Hūṇas as they were called in India. The solution to this problem in the words of the medieval commentator Medātithi was that if the *varṇa* laws were introduced into the region (or continued to be maintained) then it would be fit for the performance of sacrifices.[94]

The coming of the Huns was not a traumatic event in the history of India. Its impact has perhaps been exaggerated owing to its continual comparison with the arrival of the Huns in Europe. Even the parallel which is frequently drawn between the Huns dealing a death blow to the Roman empire and the Hūṇas doing the same to the Gupta empire (fourth–fifth centuries AD) is not strictly comparable since the nature of the two empires was different as also the cause of their decline. Northern India was by now familiar with foreign invasions and government under *mleccha* dynasties. The Hūṇas were known to inhabit the northern regions and are sometimes mentioned together with the Cīna (Chinese).[95] The close of the fifth century AD saw the Hūṇa invasions of India under their chief Toramāna. The location of his inscription at Eran (Madhya Pradesh) and the discovery of his seals at Kausāmbī (Uttar Pradesh) point to his having controlled a substantial part of *āryāvarta*.[96] Hence the problem of living in a region overrun by the *mleccha* referred to earlier. Toramāna's son Mihīrakula lived up to the conventional image of the Hun. He is particularly remembered for his cruelty which has become a part of northern Indian folklore.[97] His violence however was directed mainly against the Buddhists and the Jainas, whose literature is replete with complaints about him.[98] He was however forced back from the Ganga valley and the Hūṇa kingdom after him was reduced to a small area of northern India. The Hūṇa invasion itself did not produce any major changes in the life of northern India, except at the topmost political level. Epigraphical evidence suggests that the feudatories of the Gupta kings continued as the local governors under Hūṇa rule.[99] Hūṇas used Sanskrit as their official language and patronized Hindu cults and sects.

The impact of the Huns was greater in other spheres. Hun activities in Central Asia affected north Indian trade which had close links with central Asia. Furthermore in the wake of the Huns came a number of other tribes and peoples from central Asia jostling for land and occupation in northern India. This led to a migration of peoples in these parts which in turn upset one of the stabilizing factors of the caste structure, the inter-relationship between caste and locality. Some of these movements of peoples from the north southwards can be traced in the place names and the caste names, as in the case of the Gurjaras and Ābhīras.[100]

Politically too the period from the sixth to the ninth century tended to be unstable in northern India, barring perhaps the reign of Harṣa. The kingdoms of the northern Deccan were also beginning to take a political interest in the areas adjoining the Vindhyas, which culminated in the attempts of the Rāṣṭrakūṭa kings to capture and hold the city of Kanauj. In addition to this the system of making land grants to *brāhmaṇas* and to secular officials (to the latter in lieu of salary) was becoming more widespread.[101] In cases where the land was virgin the system resulted in the expansion of the agrarian economy. The tribes of central India were forced to adjust to both the population movements from the north as also to the encroaching agrarian economy often in the form of enforced settlements of *brāhmaṇas* and agriculturalists. That this is also the period in which the areas on the fringes of the Vindhyan uplands give rise to a number of principalities some of which play a major role in the politics of central India is not surprising. Some provided armies to neighbouring states, others became the nuclei of new states which arose on the debris of dynastic changes. The area continued to be a major artery of trade which made it a prey to many ambitious dynasties and the scene of constant battles. This uncertainty benefited the tribal peoples who exploited it to secure power for themselves.[102] However, many parts of central India remained comparatively untouched by either the agrarian economy or the culture of the *āryas* since pockets in this part of the subcontinent still harbour Dravidian and Muṇḍā-speaking tribes existing at a food-gathering stage, or at most, using primitive agriculture.

From the ninth century AD political power moved more recognizably into the hands of the erstwhile feudatories, the recipients of land grants. Some among them in turn became independent kings, granted land and revenue in lieu of salaries to their officers, and to learned *brāhmaṇas* for the acquisition of religious merit. The legal sanction of the grant was generally recorded in an inscription on stone or plates of copper, and the preamble to the grant contained the genealogy of the kings. The remarkable fact of these genealogies is that most kings claim full *kṣatriya* status on the basis of a genealogical connection with the ancient royal families, the Sūryavaṃśa (Solar lineage) and the Candravaṃśa (Lunar lineage); or else there is the myth among some Rajput dynasties of the ancestor having emerged from the sacrificial fire, the Agnikula lineage. Such genealogical connections were claimed by the majority of the dynasties of this time though not all.[103] What is even more significant is that most of these families are found on examination to be at least partially of unestablished origin.[104] Thus instead of being described as *mleccha* kings, they claim *kṣatriya* status and have had genealogies fabricated to prove the claim. Whereas the Śakas and Yavanas were denounced as *vrātya kṣatriyas* and the Āndhras were described as *mleccha* kings, the kings of this period, some of whom came from *mleccha* stock such as the Gonds and Gurjaras, are willingly accorded *kṣatriya* status. Why did the *brāhmaṇas* agree to this validation? It is possible that the distinction between *ārya* and *mleccha* had become blurred in actual practice although the *dharmaśāstras* continued to maintain it. The system of land grants appears to have played a significant part. *Brāhmaṇa* grantees were often given land in virgin areas: thus they became the nuclei of Aryan culture in non-Aryan regions.[105] This process having started in the early centuries AD resulted in more land coming under cultivation and through the intermixing of cultures, the culture even of the *ārya* was being constantly remoulded. The return on the part of the *brāhmaṇa* may have been the fabrication of a genealogy for the new ruler.

The advantage of the fabricated genealogy was that *mleccha* antecedents were soon overlooked or forgotten, particularly in those areas where the *mleccha* had become powerful. In a ninth-century inscription of a Cālukya feudatory of the Pratihāra king great pride is taken in 'freeing the earth from the Hūṇa peoples'.[106] At almost the same time a Guhilla king of the Udaipur region proudly married the daughter of a Hūṇa king.[107] Yet the founder of the Guhilla dynasty claimed to be a *brāhmaṇa*. Marriage alliances broke the kinship barrier and *mleccha* rulers became patrons of Sanskrit learning and culture, so that they were as good as *āryas* for all practical purposes. Ultimately the Hūṇas came to be regarded as on par with the Rajput clans and today the name survives merely as a caste name in the Punjab.[108] The degree of assimilation can be seen in the fact that the accepted lexicon, the *Amarakoṣa*, in its definition of *mleccha* merely lists the three tribes—the Kirāta, Pulinda and Śabara.[109] The names of erstwhile *mleccha* tribes are defined according to occupations. Thus the Ābhīras are herdsmen, the Āmbaṣṭhas physicians and scribes and the Dārada dealers in antidotes. The erstwhile *mleccha-deśa* are described with reference to their produce: thus Vaṅga produces tin and Yavana-deśa horses fit for the *aśvamedha* sacrifice.

The process of Sanskritization (the acquisition of Sanskritic culture and higher ritual status) was usually spread over some centuries. The Bedars, a *mleccha* tribe of the Deccan, are recorded in seventh-century AD sources as molesting *brāhmaṇas* who had received land grants and settled in the new areas.[110] It is stated that these plundering raids had to be warded off by the villagers themselves as the king could not enforce law and order in those areas.[111] The situation continued until about the thirteenth century. Gradually the Bedar chiefs themselves were bought off with land grants and other concessions.[112] In periods of political confusion the chiefs began to found independent principalities. Trouble between the Bahmani kings and Vijayanagara was fully exploited and the Bedars not only plundered the city of Vijayanagara in 1565 but strengthened their principalities. Sanskritization continued apace and can be seen in the claim of the Bedar kings to a high ritual status in the use of Sanskrit names such as *mahānāyakācārya*, and also in the endowment made to the temple of Gopāla-Kṛṣṇa by the Bedar chief in 1568 and ultimately in the fact that the famous Śaivite Kannappa was of Bedar origin.[113]

From about the ninth century onwards references to large numbers of indigenous peoples as *mleccha* begin to decrease. Where they are mentioned and are other than the Vindhyan tribes, it is generally for a particular reason. The tenth-century Ābhīra king is called a *mleccha* because he indulges in beef eating and plundering the pilgrims who visit the famous temple at Somanātha.[114] In eastern India there is the interesting inscriptional reference to the kingdom of Kāmarūpa (Assam) being occupied by a *mleccha* ruler, Śālastambha, who starts a new dynasty.[115] We are not told why he is a *mleccha*. Was he of tribal origin or did he have Tibetan connections?

Among the foreigners with whom there was a fair amount of contact, especially through trade, were the Chinese, the Arabs and the Turks, all of whom were of course considered *mlecchas*. Indirect contact with the Chinese goes back to the third century BC through trade in silk. Although silk was greatly appreciated in India, the Chinese were firmly relegated to the ranks of the barbarians and their land declared unfit for *śrāddha* rites.[116] They are often associated with the Kāmboja and the Yavana (presumably because of the central Asian connection) and with the Kirāta and eastern India—the two regions from which trade with China was conducted in the early period.[117] But the interest in China waned with the arrival of the Turks on the northwestern borders of India and the Arabs in the west.

The Arabs are referred to as Tājiks or as Yavanas and are regarded as *mleccha*.[118] The former relates to the fact that they came from west Asia and were in a sense the inheritors of the earlier Yavana role in India. The Turks are described correctly as Turuṣkas in some cases but more often they too came under the general term *mleccha* or are called Śakas and Yavanas.[119] The latter was probably the result of their coming from the same geographical direction as the earlier invaders. It would suggest that to the Indian mind the Turks represented a historical continuity of the Śakas and Yavanas. It does however point to a comparative lack of interest in events across the frontiers of the subcontinent that the new invaders should not have been clearly demarcated from the old. It is also possible, however, that in using the old terms there was a subconscious attempt on the part of the Indian rulers to compare themselves with earlier kings who had tried to stem the tide of the Śaka and Yavana invasions. Perhaps this degree of romanticism was essential to the medieval ethos.

It was after all the same romanticism which led comparatively minor kings to claim suzerainty over vast areas of the continent. There is a recurring list of places which occurs in many of the inscriptions of this period and becomes almost a convention and which reads '... had suzerainty over the *mleccha*, Aṅga, Kaliṅga, Vaṅga, Odra Pāṇḍya, Karnāṭa, Lāṭa, Suhma, Gurjara, Krita and Cīna ....'[120] It is not clear in this case who the *mleccha* were, whether they were the Arabs or indigenous people, although it could well be that the word was used in an adjectival sense to cover these places which were in the earlier tradition regarded as *mleccha-deśa*. A similar convention relates to the conquest of the tribal peoples and the capture of their hill forts such as Ānarta, Mālava, Kirāta, Turuṣka, Vatsa, Matsya, etc.[121] The 'eulogy' style of inscriptions in which these conventions are observed continued to be used even for the Turkish Sultans after they had established their rule.

Mleccha as a term of exclusion also carried within it the possibility of assimilation, in this case the process by which the norms of the sub-culture find their way in varying degrees into the cultural mainstream. Assimilation can be achieved at various levels. The obvious forms are noticeable in external habits such as names, dress, eating-habits and amusements. The more subtle forms are those which can be seen in the framework of law and of religious beliefs. The sanskritizing of names was a common feature among both indigenous and foreign *mlecchas* who slowly tried to move away from their status of *mleccha*.[122] Very often in the case of ruling families it took one or two generations to make the transition. In other situations it took a longer time. The importation of foreign fashions is evident from the terracotta and stone sculpture of various periods. The tendency was to follow the dictates of the court circles. The coûture of the deities however was more rigidly bound by conventional forms. Assimilation can also be seen in the appropriation of melodies and musical forms associated with *mleccha* peoples into the mainstream of music.[123] One of the most direct forms of the expression of Brahmanical ritual purity was on the form and type of food which the *brāhmaṇa* could eat. He was forbidden to accept cooked food from any *non-brāhmaṇa*.[124] Eatables were ranked in a carefully determined order of priority. Thus when the Punjab became a *mleccha* area, its staple food was given a lower place in the hierarchy of food-ranking. Whereas the Ṛgvedic *ārya* had a staple diet of wheat and barley, by the twelfth century AD wheat was described in one lexicon as 'the food of the *mlecchas*' (*Mleccha-bhojana*) and rice became the 'pure' cereal.[125] Onions and garlic were also regarded as the food of the *mleccha* and therefore prohibited to the *brāhmaṇa*. One of the habits of the *mlecchas* which seriously defiled them was the fact that they drank alcohol and ate the flesh of the cow, and this in later periods was strictly forbidden to the twice-born.[126]

We have seen that an essential difference between the *ārya* and the *mleccha* was that the latter did not conform to the law of *varṇa*. On one occasion the god Indra is asked how the Yavanas, Śakas, Cīnas, Kāmbojas, Pulindas, etc., can be brought within the social pale, and he replies that if they follow the *dharma* of the *śāstras* (essentially the law of the *varṇa*), they can be admitted.[127] For the laws of the *mleccha* and the laws of the *āryas* were distinct. As was the case with other *jātis*, the *mleccha* appear to have had their own customary laws and functioned within the framework of these. Within the law of the *śāstras* a sharp differentiation was maintained between the status and rights of the *ārya* and the *mleccha*. A significant and relevant example of this is that the *mleccha* is permitted to sell or mortgage his own life and that of his offspring.[128] But an *ārya* can never be subjected to slavery, except for very short periods when he is in adverse circumstances.

An even more subtle form of assimilation was through the incorporation of cults and cult-priests into the religious beliefs and rituals of the established religions of the *āryas*. In the case of the Buddhists the problem was easier since there was not the same stress on ritual ranking as among the *brāhmaṇas*. The Śaka and Yavana rulers and particularly their queens who were patrons of Buddhism were accepted as fully as other Indian ruling families.[129] For the indigenous *mleccha* the acceptance of Buddhism did not necessitate the disavowal of earlier cults, since Buddhism has commonly assimilated local cults in its process of expansion. Buddhism itself arose in *mleccha* areas and it is significant that the main strongholds of Buddhism were in these areas. However, it tended to by-pass the tribes of the Vindhyas probably because the nature of their cults, stressing violence and the shedding of blood at sacrifices, precluded easy acceptance into Buddhism.

The Brahmanical religion did not remain rigid either. The Bhāgavata Vaiṣṇava tradition and Śaivism which emerged in the early centuries AD stressing the personal devotion, *bhakti*, of the worshipper for an individual deity, made the religion more flexible and more easily exportable. It was this tradition of Brahmanism that could and did attract foreign *mlecchas*. The Greek Heliodorus records his devotion to Viṣṇu and speaks of himself as a member of the Bhāgavata sect.[130] The Hūṇas appear to have been quite acceptable to both the major sects of Hinduism. Toramāna was a Vaiṣṇava and a patron of those who worshipped the *varāha* (boar) incarnation of Viṣṇu. As a royal patron he was the direct successor to one of the Gupta emperors who had earlier donated a cave to this worship at a place not too far from the site of Toramāna's inscription.[131] Mihīrakula was such an ardent Śaivite that he was led to an extreme intolerance of the Buddhists and Jainas, again a tradition which is recorded of earlier rulers of Kashmir.[132] Perhaps the Sun and Fire cults of the Hūṇas acted as a bridge towards their acceptance of and by Hinduism. With the strengthening of the Bhāgavata tradition there was a proliferation of new sects, some of which in their social attitudes were recognizably anti-brahmanical, such as the Śaiva Siddhāntas and others which maintained a flexible attitude to caste such as the Liṅgāyatas. As in the case of the Buddhists and Jainas, such sects did not discriminate between *ārya* and *mleccha* peoples, and for the latter this became an avenue of entry into *ārya* society, since ultimately many of these sects became independent castes within the *varṇa* system.

In the case of the indigenous *mleccha* many of the cults were slowly absorbed into the main cultural tradition. Of these perhaps the most obvious were the fertility cults, especially those devoted to the worship of the mother goddess, and the phallus (*liṅgam*) and snake cults.[133] These cults were not totally foreign to Brahmanism, but in the period after the fifth century AD they began to play a more dominant role in the evolution of Hinduism.[134] The mother goddess, Devī, in various manifestations appears to have been the most popular deity among the *mleccha*. Vindhyavāsinī, one of the names for the consort of Śiva, was worshipped by the Śabaras, Barbaras and Pulindas.[135] The name itself means 'she who inhabits the Vindhyas', and clearly she was in origin a mountain goddess. She is said to be commonly worshipped by brigands, and the rites involved the eating of meat and the drinking of wine.[136] In another form she is described as the goddess of the outcastes who bring her oblations of sacrificed animals.[137] Elsewhere she is identified with Nārāyaṇī and Durgā, both well-known manifestations of Śiva's wife and both repeatedly associated with the *mleccha* tribes in early literature.[138] The name Śavari, meaning a Śabara woman, occurs as the name of a goddess in a medieval work.[139] The Śavarotsava or Festival of the Śabaras was a bacchanalian gathering, as well it might have been with a fertility cult as its focus. The Kirāta worshipped the goddess Caṇḍikā, yet another manifestation of

Śiva's wife Durgā, a more fearsome form of the goddess being responsible for the destruction of the buffalo-demon Mahiṣāsura. The *Devī Māhātmya*, one of the more important sources on the mother-goddess cult, suggests an eastern if not Tibetan origin for the birth of the goddess Caṇḍi.[140] By the medieval period the cults of Durgā and Caṇḍi had been absorbed into classical Hinduism. In fact, a substantial part of Hinduism itself had undergone transformation with the popularity of the Śaktī-Śākta cults and Tantricism.

Nor were the cult priests left behind. Depending on the status of the cult they would enter the hierarchy of Brahmanism. As the cult became refined and found a niche in classical Hinduism the cult priest would also become Sanskritized and be given ritual status in the *brāhmaṇa varṇa*. This would account for the existence of contradictory categories such as the Āmbaṣṭha *brāhmaṇa* and the Ābhīra *brāhmaṇa*. It would also explain the gradual evolution in status of the Maga *brāhmaṇas* who are said to have come from Śakadvīpa in the west.[141] They are at first looked down upon and not admitted to all the *śrāddha* ceremonies. This may have been because they were soothsayers and astrologers rather than genuine *brāhmaṇas* or else because of their association with the sun cult, which, being a more powerful religious force in western Asia, may have been regarded as somewhat foreign.[142] But gradually their position improved when they were patronized by the royal courts, especially at Thānesar and Kāmarūpa, and they were regarded as the proper people to install and consecrate images of Sūrya and the sun-god.[143] Their association with the sun cult remained constant. However they still married into *non-brāhmaṇa* castes such as the Bhojas and the Yādavas. By the medieval period however they were treated with considerable respect. The curious legends which are told about the origin of certain *brāhmaṇa* families such as those of the Chitpavans who are said to have virtually walked in from the sea,[144] would also suggest that these were families of cult priests who were gradually assimilated into the Hindu social structure.

There was however one facet in the concept of the barbarian which was absent—the notion of the pagan. This did finally arrive in India but never became an intrinsic part of the Indian notion since Indian religions had no use for this concept. It was applied by the Muslims who came to India to the non-Muslim inhabitants of India. They were regarded as pagans and by extension less civilized and the Muslims in turn were described as *mleccha*. From about the fifteenth century onwards, when

Turkish and Afghan rule had been established in many parts of the subcontinent, Muslims at all levels of society came to be described more extensively as *mleccha*. They were *mleccha* partly because some were foreign in origin, although the majority were locally born and bred; but what was more important, they were associated with an alien language (either Arabic, Turkish or Persian) although here again the majority spoke the local language; and they could not in theory conform to the laws of *varṇa* since Islamic laws demand an egalitarian society. Certainly they did not observe the rules of ritual purity. Gradually however the social organization of the converted Muslims began to retain many of their caste mores prior to conversion. It is also possible that since a sizeable proportion of conversions to Islam in India were from the lower castes (conversion to a non-caste religion being one of the traditional methods of trying to by-pass caste), this also encouraged the use of the description *mleccha*.

The most significant clue to assimilation lies not so much in the loss of ethnic identity as in participation in the sense of the past. There is the mutual appropriation of the past on the part of two groups where the group with the weaker historical tradition accepts the stronger tradition. This was certainly the case with foreign peoples who settled in India and with the indigenous tribes. Sanskritization implied the acceptance of the historical tradition to the same degree as the organization of the tribe according to the laws of *varṇa* and *jāti*. Hence the importance of genealogies in the process of both historical and social validation. Yet this sense of the past was in itself the result of assimilation at various points in time and was given direction by the elements which went into the making of the social fabric. Islamic historiography brought with it its own highly developed philosophy of the past which had little in common with traditional Indian historiography except that they were both powerful traditions within the culture.

It is perhaps the very contradiction in the Indian concept of the barbarian which makes it distinctively different from that of Europe. The perception of differences—linguistic, cultural and physical—set the barbarian apart. The separateness was seen not so much in terms of what the barbarians did as in the fact that they did not observe the norms of ritual purity and were to that extent polluted. The lack of description of the *mleccha*, comparatively speaking, was based on the assumption that no self-respecting man would associate with them as long as they were designated as *mleccha*. In a sense, this was the ultimate in segregation.

Theoretically this position was maintained throughout. Yet in practice not only were concessions made, as for example, in the notion of the *vrātya kṣatriya*, but large numbers of *mleccha* peoples were incorporated into the social, political and religious system and were in fact the progenitors of many of the essentials of Indian culture. It would be a moot point as to whether this could be called a culture which entirely excludes those whom it had once regarded as the barbarian.

Notes and References

* Published in *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, October 1971, no. 4, vol. 13, 408–36, published by Cambridge University Press. Copyright © 1971 by Cambridge University Press. Used with permission.

1. E.g. Caldwell, *A Comparative Grammar of the Dravidian or South Indian Family of Languages*, London, 1875. Thus, all south Indian *brāhmaṇas* who use Sanskrit were seen as originally Aryan.
2. The use of the word 'Aryan' in this article refers to those peoples who spoke an Indo-Aryan language. It has no ethnic connotation and is merely used as a more manageable form than the phrase 'Aryan speaking people' with which it is synonymous.
3. For a discussion of the nature and impact of Aryan culture on existing cultures in northern India, see the section on Archaeology and History in volume II.
4. Categories of speech are demarcated in Vedic literature, reflecting a considerable concern for the correctness of speech. *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*, IV, 1, 3, 16; *Taittirīya Samhitā*, VI, 4, 7, 3; *Maitrāyaṇī Samhitā*, III, 6, 8.
5. The *Nyāyamalavistāra*. *Manu*, X, 45, distinguishes between *mlecchavāc* and *ārya-vāc*.
6. Recent exponents of this view are the Finnish scholars, Parpola et al., who have made this identification basic to their reading of the Harappan script as Proto-Dravidian, *Decipherment of the Proto-Dravidian Inscriptions of the Indus Civilisation*, Copenhagen, 1969. An even more recent reading is that of I. Mahadevan who reads two Harappan pictograms as **mil-ey* which becomes **mil-ec* which in turn becomes *mleccha* in Sanskrit, all of which mean 'the resplendent ones'—the assumption being that this was the name by which the Harappan people called themselves. *Journal of Tamil Studies*, II, no. 1, 1970.
7. *Vinaya Piṭaka*, III, 28.
8. Buddhaghoṣa's commentary explains it as '*Andha Damil, ādi*'. The *Jaimini Dharmaśāstra* gives a short list of *mleccha* words, 1, 3, 10.

9. R. Shafer, *Ethnography of Ancient India*, Wiesbaden, 1954, p. 23.
10. *Aṣṭādhyāyi*, VII, 2, 18.
11. N.R. Bannerjee, *The Iron Age in India*, Delhi, 1965.
12. Such as *mleccha-deśa* (country), *mleccha-bhāṣā* (language), *Mlecchanivāha* (horde), *mleccha-bhojana* (food—used by rice-eaters for non-rice eaters, particularly those eating wheat), *mleccha-vāc* (speech).
13. *Mahābhārata*, XII, 200, 40.
14. *Majjhima Nikāya*, I, 128.
15. *Ṛg Veda*, III, 12, 6; II, 12, 4; III, 34, 9; V; 29; 10; IV, 16, 9; I, 33, 4; X, 22, 8; II, 20, 8.
16. *Ṛg Veda*, III, 34, 9; II, 24, 4; I, 104, 2. The word '*varṇa*' literally means 'colour' and came to be used for *varṇa* society or caste society. With the exception of the *brāhmaṇas* and the *kṣatriyas* the precise status of the other two was never uniform.
17. *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*, III, 2, 1, 23; which reads *te'surā ātta-vacaso he'lavo he'lava iti vadantaḥ pārābabhūbuḥ*. The Kaṇva recession has a variant reading (Sacred Books of the East, XXVI; p. 31, n. 3) but the end result is similar.
18. *Vyākaraṇa Mahābhāṣya*, I, 1, 1, which reads, *te'surā helayo hetaya iti kurvantaḥ pārābabhūbuḥ*. In both cases the word for enemy, *ari*, uses 'l' instead of the more general Indo-Aryan 'r'. The Asuras here referred to are a puzzle. They are described as demons, but also as a maritime people whom the Aryans of the *Ṛg Veda* had to contend with. Archaeological remains in Chhota Nagpur are associated by the locals with the Asuras. Banerji Sastri, *Journal of the Bihar Oriental Research Society*, XII, part ii, 246ff.
19. A characteristic of the Prākrit of eastern India attested by the inscriptions of Aśoka is that the 'r' sound changes into 'l', J. Bloch, *Les Inscriptions d'Asoka*, Paris, 1950, p. 112.
20. *Manu*, II, 23; X, 45.
21. *Āryāvarta* was traditionally the region inhabited by the *āryas*. Its precise geographical area is difficult to define as the concept was not static in history. Broadly speaking, however, the Ganga–Yamuna Doāb and the plain of Kurukshetra to the north of Delhi would roughly correspond to *āryāvarta*, in the earliest sense. Some texts extend the definition to include almost the entire Indo-Gangetic plain, e.g., *Manu*, II, 17–74.
22. *Viṣṇu*, LXXXIV, 1–4.
23. *Manu*, X, 45, 57; speaks of *ārya-vāc* and *ārya-rūpa* (noble speech and noble visage) where *ārya* is used in an adjectival form. The Pāli *ayya* or *ajja* carries the same sense. The antonym of *anārya*, *dāsa* or *dasyu* again carries the meaning of lacking in worthiness and respect and cannot be taken in an ethnic sense alone.
24. S.K. Aiyangar, *Some Contributions of South India to Indian Culture*, Calcutta, 1923, pp. 1–42.

25. *Manu*, X, 10–12; 16–17.
26. Others included the Āndhras, Ābhīra, Pulinda, Khāsa, Māgadha, Kirāta, Malla. *Gautama Dharmaśāstra*, IV, 4; *Baudhāyana*, I, 9, 3; *Vasiṣṭha*, XVIII, 9.
27. *Gautama*, IV, 15ff; *Baudhāyana*, I, 8, 8; *Vasiṣṭha*, XVIII, 1–6.
28. *Manu*, X, 39.
29. *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa*, VIII, 21; The Āmbaṣṭha tribe is frequently identified by modern scholars with the Ambastanoi of Arrian and the Sambastoi of Diodorus. H.C. Raychaudhuri, *Political History of Ancient India*, Calcutta, 1952, p. 255.
30. *Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa*, III, 8, 5.
31. *Taittirīya Samhitā*, 1, 8, 9, 1–2; The *sūta* was one of the *ratnins* at the rites of the *vājapeya* sacrifice.
32. Pāṇini, II, 4, 10. R.S. Sharma, *Śūdras in Ancient India*, Delhi, 1958, p. 125, suggests that originally they may have been an aboriginal tribe using their own dialect, the *cāṇḍāla-bhāṣā*.
33. *Pañcavimśataka Brāhmaṇa*, XVII, 1, 9; 53, 2. *Āpastambha Dharmasūtra*, XXII, 5, 4.
34. As for example the use of the term *vrātya-kṣatriya* or 'degenerate *kṣatriyas*' in the Manu *Dharmaśāstra* when describing the Greeks, or *vrātya* for those who have failed to fulfil their sacred duties, X, 20; II, 39.
35. *Atharvaveda*, XV.
36. Also included were the Bedar, Daśārna, Mātaṅga, Pundra, Lambakarṇa, Ekpāda, Yakṣa, Kinnara, Kīkata, Niṣāda. Some of these are fanciful names—Long-ears, Single-footed; some were celestial beings; but in the main both literature and epigraphs record the names of many of these peoples.
37. D.R. Chanana, *Agriculture in the Rāmāyaṇa*, New Delhi, 1964.
38. Yāska in *Nirukta*, II, 2. *Atharvaveda*, V, 22, 14; *Chāndogya Upaniṣad*, VI, 14, 1, 2.
39. The western Ānavas were the Yaudheyas, Āmbaṣṭha, Śibi, Sindhu, Sauvīra, Kaikeya, Madra, Vṛṣadarbha. The eastern Ānavas were the people of Aṅga, Vaṅga, Kaliṅga, Pundra and Suhma. It has been suggested that the names ending in *aṅga* are of Muṇḍā origin and these tribes would therefore be pre-Aryan. P.C. Bagchi (ed.), *Pre-Aryan and Pre-Dravidian in India*, Calcutta, 1929.
40. *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa*, VIII, 14, 23; *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*, III, 2, 3, 5.
41. Atanatīya Sutta, *Dīgha Nikāya*, III, pp. 199ff.
42. *Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa*, II, 19, 24; III, 59, 46, *Vāyu*, 91, 7; *Matsya*, 83, 34; 105, 20.
43. The Kuru tribe had a well-known status and antiquity. They acquired fame through the epic *Mahābhārata* which concerns a family feud between the Kauravas and the Pāṇḍavas, both members of the Kuru lineage. The Pañcālas were a confederation of five tribes. According to bardic tradition the royal family of the Pañcālas was an off-shoot of the Bharata family.

44. B.B. Lal, 'Further Copper Hoards from the Gangetic Basin ...', *Ancient India*, no. 7, 1951, pp. 20ff. S.P. Gupta, 'Indian Copper Hoards', *Journal of the Bihar Research Society*, XLIX, 1963, pp. 147ff.
45. *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*, I, 4, 1, 10.
46. *Atharvaveda*, V.22.14. *Baudhāyana Dharmasūtra*, I, 1, 32–3; *Manu*, X, 11.
47. Texts as late as the *Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa* and the *Yajñvalkya Smṛti*, III, 292, repeat the need for the *prāyaścitta*.
48. *Prajñapaṇa Upaṅga*, p. 397; *Ācāranga Sūtra*, II, 3, 1; II, 11, 17.
49. *Aṅguttara Nikāya*, I, 213. The sixteen *mahājanapadas* or major states are listed as Gandhāra, Kāmboja, Kuru, Pañcāla, Śūrasena, Matsya, Kosala, Kāśī, Malla, Vṛjji, Magadha, Aṅga, Vatsa, Cedi, Āvanti, Asmaka.
50. *Sammoha-vinodinī*, Vibhāga commentary, 388; *Manoratha-purāṇi*, Aṅguttara Commentary, I, 409; *Apādāna*, II, 359; *Sutta Nipāta*, 977.
51. *Jātaka*, VI, 208, 210. Cf. *Manu*, X, 44.
52. *Summaṅgala Vilāsinī*, I, 276; *Sammoha-vinodini*, 388.
53. *Sammoha-vinodinī*; the ancestry of the Pulinda located in Ceylon alone, according to the Buddhist sources, derives from the marriage of prince Vijaya with the demoness Kuveni.
54. The *Caṇḍāla* is known and mentioned in Buddhist sources but usually in the context of his overcoming his low status although this is often done through the acquisition of some spiritual power.
55. Major Rock Edict, XII. J. Bloch, *Les Inscriptions d'Asoka*, pp. 130ff. Aśoka lists the Yona, Kāmboja, Nābhaka, Bhoja, Pitinika, Āndhra and Pālida.
56. The Second Separate Edict. J. Bloch, Les *Inscriptions d'Asoka*, pp. 140ff.
57. *Arthaśāstra*, II, 1; III, 16; VII, 8; VIII, 4; IX, 1; IX, 3; X, 2.
58. McCrindle, *India as Described by Megasthenes and Arrian*, pp. 20–1; McCrindle, *India as Described by Ktesias*, pp. 23–4, 86. Earlier Greek writers such as Ktesias, the Greek physician at the Persian court in the sixth century BC, referred to the Indian king trading cotton and weapons for fruit, dyes and gum with the Kynokephaloi or Kynomolgoi, a barbarian tribe. The identity of this tribe has not been conclusively established as yet.
59. *Matsya Purāṇa*, 34, 30; 50, 76.
60. Utpala's commentary on the *Bṛhatsamhitā*, XIII, 3, describes the Śakas as *mleccha-jātayo-rājanas* and adds that the period of their destruction by Vikramāditya would be known as *Śaka-kāla*.
61. A large number of early Sanskrit inscriptions come from the *mleccha* areas of northern and western India. *Corpus Inscriptionum Indicarum*, vol. II. The Greeks had used Greek and Prākrit or Sanskrit bilingually as on their coins: Obverse—*Basileus Suthos Menandros*, Reverse—*Mahārājas Trādarasa Menamdrasa*. Smith, *Catalogue of Coins in the Indian Museum*, Calcutta, vol. I,

pp. 22ff. Kuṣāṇa coins show a slow but increasing adoption of Indian deities particularly of the Śaivite family. The Śaka kings not only affirm their protection of the law of *varṇa* but even record large donations of cows and villages and wealth to the *brāhmaṇas*. Rudradāman's Junāgadh Inscription, *Epigraphia Indica*; VIII, no. 6, pp. 44ff.

62. *Manu*, X, 43–4; *Mahābhārata*, Anuśāsana Parva, 35.17ff; Vana Parva, 48.20ft; Śānti Parva, 65.13ff
63. Kanakasabhai, *The Tamils Eighteen Hundred Years Ago*, Madras, 1904, pp. 37ff. M. Subramaniam, *Pre-Pallava Tamil Index*, Madras, 1966, p. 618.
64. McCrindle, *Invasion of India by Alexander*, p. 234; *Mahābhārata*, Sabhā Parva, 29.5ff; *British Museum Catalogue of Indian Coins*, p. cv. The legend reads, *mālava-gaṇasya-jaya*.
65. McCrindle, *The Invasion of India by Alexander*, p. 232; *Mahābhārata*, Sabhā Parva, 29.5ff; *Journal of the Numismatic Society of India*, IX, p. 82; *British Museum Catalogue*, p. cxxiv; the legend reads *sibi janapadasa*.
66. *Aṣṭādhyāyi*, V, 3, 116; *Mahābhārata*. Sabhā Parva, 29.5ff; the legends reads, *trakaṭaka janapadasa*. *Aṣṭādhyāyi*, IV, 1, 178; *British Museum Catalogue*, pp. cxlix–cl. The legend reads, *yaudheya-bahū-dhānyake*, and a fourth-century coin-mould reads, *yaudheya-gaṇasya-jaya*.
67. The Allahabad *praśasti* of Samudragupta. *Corpus Inscriptionum Indicarum*, III, pp. 66ff.
68. The eighteen major *Purāṇas* were recorded from about the third century AD onwards. They claim to be compendia of information orally transmitted over a period going back to c. 3000 BC. The texts deal with the mythologies of the creation of the universe, genealogies of kings and sages, social custom and religious practices generally pertaining to a particular sect of which each *Purāṇa* claims to be the sacred book. In fact much of the material reflects contemporary attitudes at the time of the composition of the *Purāṇa*. The genealogical sections are in the form of a prophecy, an obvious attempt to claim antiquity.
69. Puranic cosmology envisages a cyclical movement of time and the world goes through a period of four ages with the golden age at the start and an increase in evil through the duration of the cycle. The last of the four is the Kaliyuga at the end of which evil will be prevalent and the *mleccha* all-powerful. Ultimately the entire universe will be totally destroyed after which a new universe will be created and the cycle will start again.
70. *Vāyu Purāṇa*, 99; *Bhāgvata*, XII, 2, 1–16; 44–51; II, 38; XII, 3, 25; 3, 35–6. Deprived of sacrificial activities the world will be reduced to *mleccha*-hood.
71. *Matsya Purāṇa*, 47, 252; *Vāyu*, 98, 114; *Brahmāṇḍa*, III, 14, 80; 22, 22; 73, 108; 35, 10; IV, 29, 131.
72. *Viṣṇu Purāṇa*, IV, 24, 51; *Brahmāṇḍa*, II, 16, 59; III, 14, 80; IV, 29, 131; *Manu*, X, 8–38; *Yājñavalkya smṛti*, III, 292; *Smṛti-candrikā*, I 22–4. This is particularly

contradictory in the case of the *Purānas* where a number of *mleccha* cults and rites had become incorporated into the recognized religion, especially rites associated with the mother-goddess. For the reference to the Śakas and Yavanas see, e.g. Nasik Cave Inscription, *Epigraphia Indica*, VIII, no. 8, pp. 60ff.

73. In the Rudrādhyāya of the *Yajurveda*. Other degraded professions are the nomads, carpenters, chariot-makers, potters, smiths, fowlers, dogkeepers and hunters. In this text as also the *Nirukta* of Yāska they are mentioned as the fifth group after the four *varṇas*, III, 8; X, 3, 5–7.
74. *Manu*, *X*, 8, 18, 48. They were said to have been descended from the marriage between a *brāhmaṇa* and a *śūdra* woman.
75. *Garuḍa Purāṇa*, VI, 6; LV, 15; *Harivaṃśa*, XV, 27, 33.
76. *Viṣṇu Purāṇa*, I, 13.
77. *Matsya Purāṇa*, 10, 4–10; *Bhāgvata*, IV, 13, 42, 47; *Mahābhārata*, Śānti Parva, 59.99ff.
78. *Matsya Purāṇa*, 10, 7.
79. The *Amarakoṣa*, VII, 21; a lexicon of the post-Gupta period, in its definition of *mleccha*, mentions these three tribes and describes them as hunters and deer killers, living in mountainous country, armed with bows and arrows and speaking an unintelligible language—the conventional description of the *mleccha* by the time of the medieval period. Yet the location of *mleccha-deśa* in this text is not in central India but in northern India.
80. *Ṛg Veda*, III, 53, 14; *Mahābhārata*, II.13.19ff; *Bhāgvata Purāṇa*, 11, 21, 8; *Manu*, X, 44.
81. *Mahābhārata*, 7.87.27ff.
82. *Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa*, p. 284; *Matsya Purāṇa*, 114, 307; a seventh-century author identifies them with the Bhila and Lubhdhaka tribes of the Vindhyas and also connects them with the Mātaṅga, the lawless hunters of the region, Daṇḍin, *Daśakumārcarita*, III, 104; VIII, 203. The name Mātaṅga is very curious and suggests a Muṇḍā-Dravidian combination. The twelfth-century *Pampa Rāmāyaṇa* of Abhināva Pampa, VII, 105–55, also refers to them.
83. Bhāravi's long poem, the *Kirātārjunīya*, is based on an episode from the *Mahābhārata* when Arjuna goes into the Himalayas and does penance. He finally meets the god Śiva in the form of a Kirāta with whom he has a protracted fight, but eventually acquires the divine weapons which he is seeking. It is interesting that the Kirāta should be identified with Śiva—perhaps suggesting their worship of Śiva, and also that it is through a Kirāta that the great hero Arjuna acquires the divine weapons.
84. *Pampa Rāmāyaṇa*, Nijagunayogi's Vivekcintāmaṇi, pp. 423–4. Chikka Deva inscription of the seventeenth century in Rice, *Mysore and Coorg from its Inscriptions*, p. 129.

85. Buddhist sources refer to the children of the demoness whom prince Vijaya married on his arrival in Ceylon as the Pulinda and state that they lived in the interior of the island at a place called Sabaragamuva (= Śabaragrāma. the village of the Śabaras?), *Mahāvaṃsa*, VII, 68; *Vinaya Piṭaka*, I, 168. These have come to be associated with the primitive Veddah tribes of Ceylon. In early brahmanical sources they are mentioned as a wild mountain tribe of the Deccan, *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa*, VII, 18; *Mahābhārata*, Ādī Parva, 165.3ff. Later sources connect them with the Bhillas, *Kathāsaritasāgara*, II,12; *Amarakoṣa*, II, 20–1.
86. Ptolemy, VII, 1, 64; Ptolemy's phrase brings to mind the use of the *Piśāca* in Indian literature which also carries the meaning of those who eat raw flesh. Its most obvious connection is with the famous *Bṛhatkathā* of Guṇāḍhya which was written in a *Piśāca* or goblin language, and the location was the Vindhyas. Possibly the *Piśāca* language was that of these *mleccha* tribes. Interestingly, it is often associated by some scholars with the north western areas which may suggest a migration of some at least of these peoples from the north-west to the Vindhyas. Keith, *A History of Sanskrit Literature*, Oxford, 1928, pp. 266ff.
87. *Rāmāyaṇa*, I.54.1–3; *Kathāsaritasāgara*, IV, 22.
88. *Nāṭyaśāstra*, XXI, 89; *Bṛhatkathāślokasangraha*, VIII, 31.
89. *Rāmāyaṇa*, Ādī Kāṇḍa, I, 47ff; Aranya Kāṇḍa, LXXVII, 6–32. Bāṇa, *Kādambari*, p. 12.
90. Dholpur Inscription, *Indian Antiquary*, XIX, p. 35; Khadavada Inscription of the time of Gyas Sahi of Mandu, *Journal of the Bombay Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society*, XXIII, p. 12.
91. *Rāmāyaṇa*, IV, 37–8.
92. *Amuktamālyada*, IV, 206.
93. *Viṣṇu Dharmasūtra*, 71, 59, 84, 2–4; *Vasiṣṭha*, 6, 41; *Gautama*, IX, 17; *Atri*, VII, 2. The *śrāddha* ceremony was an essential rite for the *ārya* since it concerned the offering of food to the spirits of the ancestors and thereby strengthened and re-affirmed kin ties. It is clearly stated in the above texts that the *ārya* is prohibited from speaking with the *mleccha*, from learning their language or from making journeys to a *mleccha-deśa* since contact with the *mleccha* was polluting. The journeys were regarded with particular disapproval since the *śrāddha* ceremony could not be performed in such areas.
94. *Medātithi*, a tenth-century commentator, on *Manu*, II, 23.
95. *Mahāvastu*, I, 135, *Raghuvaṃśa*, IV, 67–8.
96. Eran Stone Boar Inscription, *Corpus Inscriptionum Indicarum*, vol. III, p. 158; G.R. Sharma, *Excavations at Kauśāmbi*, pp. 15–16.
97. *Rājataraṅgiṇī*, I, 306–7; Kalhaṇa calls him the 'god of destruction', 1.289.
98. E.g. Hsüan Tsang's descriptions: S. Beal, *Buddhist Records of the Western World*, I, London, 1883, pp. 177ff.

99. Dhānyaviṣṇu the brother of Matṛviṣṇu (*viśayapati* of the Gupta king Budhagupta) became the feudatory of Toramāna. Cf. The Eran Inscription of Budhagupta, *Corpus Inscriptionum Indicarum*, III, p. 89 with the Eran Stone Boar Inscription of Toramāna, *Corpus Inscriptionum Indicarum*, p. 158. Budhagupta in his inscription is referred to merely as *bhupati* (king), whereas Toramāna takes the full imperial title of *Mahārājādhirāja* and is described as 'the glorious', 'of great fame and lustre' and 'ruling the earth'.

100. It was believed that the Gurjaras came from central Asia after the sixth century AD and were of Tocharian extraction, D.R. Bhandarkar, *Indian Antiquary*, January 1911, pp. 21–2; A.C. Bannerjee, *Lectures in Rajput History*, p. 7; P.C. Bagchi, *India and Central Asia*, Calcutta, 1955, p. 17. But this view is now being replaced by their being of north Indian origin. Place names in the Punjab—Gujarat, Gujeranwala, etc.—suggest a settlement there as do the presence of the Gujjar herdsmen in Kashmir. The Gurjara Pratihāras ruled in western India, and there is the more recent Gujarat as a name of western India. The existence of the Gujjar caste in Maharashtra points to a further movement towards the south; I. Karve, *Hindu Society*, Poona, 1961. The Bad-Gujar clan survives among the Rajputs as also the *brāhmaṇa* caste, Gujar-Gauḍa.

    The Ābhīra are nomadic herdsmen who are believed to have migrated into India with the Scythians. Some of them very soon rose to importance, such as the general Rudrabhūti, Gunda Inscription of AD 181 in *Epigraphia Indica*, VIII, p. 188. They are located in the lower Indus and Kathiawar region, *Bhāgvata Purāṇa*, 1, 10, 35; *Periplus*, 41; *Ptolemy*, VII, 1, 55. The Ābhīras are described as *mlecchas* and *śūdras* in status, *Manu*, X, 15; *Mahābhāṣya*, I, 2, 72. They gradually took over political power from the Śakas and the Sātavāhanas and spread down the west coast of India where there is mention of the Konkanābhīra, *Bṛhatsamhitā*, 14, 12; 5, 42; 14, 18. Samudragupta in the Allahabad *praśasti* refers to the conquest of the Ābhīras, *Corpus Inscriptionum Indicarum*, III, 6ff. A tenth-century Pratihāra inscription speaks of removing the menace of the Ābhīras in western India, Ghatiyala Pillar Inscription, *Epigraphia Indica*, IX, p. 280.

101. This situation is discussed by R.S. Sharma in his, *Indian Feudalism*, Calcutta, 1965.

102. Ghatiyala Pillar Inscription, *Epigraphia Indica*, IX, p. 280.

103. The Gaṅga and Caṇḍella dynasties claim Candravaṃśi descent, the Gurjara-Pratihāras Sūryavaṃśi descent and the Parmāras regard their ancestor as having emerged from the Agnikula. The Guhilas, the Cālukyas of Veṅgi, the Cālukyas of Bādāmi and the Cālukyas of Kalyāni all claim solar descent. D.C. Sircar, 'The Guhila Claim of Solar Origin', *The Journal of Indian History*, 1964, no. 42.

104. An example of this, which was a common condition, is discussed in D.C. Sircar, *The Guhilas of Kishkinda*, Calcutta, 1965. Even the Khaśa chiefs claim *kṣatriya* status in the Bodh Gaya inscription, *Epigraphia Indica*, XII, p. 30. That the Pratihāras claim to descend from Lakṣmaṇa, the younger brother of Rāma, who acted as a door-keeper (*pratihāra*) also leads to a suspicion about their origins, *Indian Antiquary*, January 1911, p. 23.
105. R.S. Sharma, 'Early Indian Feudalism', in S. Gopal and R. Thapar (eds), *Problems of Historical Writing in India*, New Delhi, 1963, p. 74. These ideas are further worked out in his *Social Changes in Early Medieval India*.

    The same policy was adopted by the Mughals who located colonists in these areas partly to encourage them in the ways of Islam and of 'civilization' and partly to keep a check on them, particularly at the time of the Maratha–Mughal conflict when the Vindhyan tribes occupied a strategic geographical position. It is not surprising that during the period of British rule in India, Christian missionaries were extremely active in these regions.
106. Una Pillar Inscription of Avantivarman II, dated AD 899, *Epigraphia Indica*, IX, pp. 6ff.
107. Atpur Inscription of Śaktikumār, *Indian Antiquary*, XXXIX, pp. 191ff.
108. *Kanhadeprabandha* of Padmanābha, a fifteenth-century work, mentions a Hūṇa among the list of Rajput *jagīrdārs*, *The Journal of Indian History*, XXXVIII, p. 106.
109. *Amarakoṣa*, II, 10, 2.
110. B.L. Rice, *Mysore and Coorg from the Inscriptions*, London, 1913, p. 5.
111. *Epigraphia Carnatica*, VII, p. 188; VI, pp. 113–14.
112. The Gaṅga king Koṅgunivarman gave a grant in AD 887.
113. B.N. Saletore, *Wild Tribes in Indian History*, Delhi, 1936, pp. 81ff.
114. H.C. Ray, Dynastic *History of Northern India*, II, Calcutta, 1936, p. 941.
115. Bargaon Copper-plate of Ratnapāla, *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, p. 99; Pārbatiya plates of Vanmālaverrāmadeva, *Epigraphia Indica*, XXIX, pp. 145ff. It has been suggested that the name Śālastambha approximates a Sanskritized version of the name of the Tibetan king, Sron-bstam-sgam-po.
116. *Manu*, X, 43–4; *Matsya Purāṇa*, 16, 16.
117. *Bṛhatsamhitā*, V, 80; *Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa*, 57, 39. Chinese interest in eastern India during the seventh century AD is attested to in the reign of Harṣa and by his contemporaries in Assam. The pedestal inscription on the tomb of Tai Tsung mentions a diplomatic connection with eastern India.
118. Gwalior Inscription of Nagabhaṭṭa I; Sagar Tal Inscription, *Epigraphia Indica*, XVIII, pp. 107ff. An Arab attack in the eighth century is mentioned in the *Rājataraṅgiṇī*, VIII, 2764.
119. Māhamadi Sāhi Inscription, *Epigraphia Indica*, I, p. 93; Jaitrasiṃhadeva grant, *Epigraphia Indica*, XXXII, pp. 220ff; Chitorgarh *praśasti*, *Journal of the*

Bombay Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society, XXIII, p. 49; Madras Museum Plates, *Epigraphia Indica*, VIII, p. 9; Bhilsa Inscription of Jayasiṃha, *Epigraphia Indica*, XXXV, p. 187; Danteswara Inscription of AD 1703, *Epigraphia Indica*, IX, p. 164.

120. Bhatūrya Inscription of Rajyapāla, *Epigraphia Indica*, XXXIII, p. 150; Chitorgarh *praśasti* of Rana Kumbhakarṇa, *Journal of the Bombay Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society*, XXIII, p. 49; Bālaghāta Plate of Prithviśena II, *Epigraphia Indica*, IX, p. 270.
121. Sāgar Tal Inscription of Mihīra Bhoja, *Epigraphia Indica*, XVIII, pp. 107ff.
122. Śaka inscriptions reveal this very clearly as also the names of the Indo-Greeks, *Epigraphia Indica*, VII, pp. 53, 55; *Epigraphia Indica*, VIII, 90; *Archaeological Survey of Western India*, IV, pp. 92ff.
123. Mention is made of the Gandhāra and Kāmbhoja melodies as also of Śaka and Ābhīra melodies, *Pañcatantra*, Apanikṣetakanakam, 55.
124. From this point of view at least Indian eating habits and rituals would form an ideal subject for structuralist analysis, along the lines of the theories developed by Lévi-Strauss. See *Manu*, IV, 205–25; 247–53; for laws regarding the acceptance of various kinds of food.
125. Trikāṇḍaśesa in *Nāmalinganuśāsana* of Amarakoṣa.
126. For the prohibition on onions and garlic, *Manu*, V, 19; for references to eating the flesh of the cow, *Jaimini*, 1, 3, 10 and *Rājataraṅgiṇī*, VII, 1232.
127. *Mahābhārata*, Śānti Parva, LXV, 13–15.
128. *Viṣṇu Dharmaśāstra*, 84; *Arthaśāstra*, III, 13–15.
129. Mathura Lion Capital Inscription, *Epigraphia Indica*, IX, p. 141; Mandasor Inscription, *CII*, III, p. 81; Viṣṇudatta Inscription, *Epigraphia Indica*, VIII, p. 88. Śaka kings often refer to themselves as *dhārmika* on coin legends with the symbol of the *Dhannacakra* on the coin.
130. Fleet. 'The Besnagar Inscription', *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, 1909, pp. 1053ff.
131. Eran Stone Boar Inscription. The *varāha* cave is at Udayagiri.
132. As for example the reference to Jalauka in the *Rājataraṅginī*, I, 108–52.
133. The snake cult or worship of the Nāga is attested to in literature as well as in the archaeological remains of a multitude of *nāga* shrines. It is frequently seen as the symbol of the chthonic goddess, of the ancestors and of lunar and fertility cults, and is commonly found even to this day in the Himalayan and Vindhyan regions. In the historical period it gained considerable respectability particularly in the peninsula.
134. There is mention in the *Ṛg Veda* of the pre-Aryan cults such as the worship of the phallus, *śiśṇadevāḥ*, and the existence of sorceresses, *yātumati*, practising magic. The Harappan evidence supports the worship of the mother goddess, which was not predominant in the Ṛgvedic religion.

135. *Harivaṃśa*, II, 22, 59.
136. *Harivaṃśa*, II, 22, 53–4.
137. *Harivaṃśa*, II, 3, 12. She is sometimes described as *kṛṣṇachavisāma*, *kṛṣṇa* (as black as can be), adorned with peacock feathers and with dishevelled hair. Bāṇa, writing in the seventh century AD when speaking of the *mleccha* tribe of the Vindhyas, describes a Durgā temple, *Kādambari*, 417–26. Of the Pulindas said to be living in the Vindhyan region, an eleventh-century text states that their king adores the cruel Devī, offers her human victims and pillages the caravans, *Kathāsaritasāgara*, IV, 22.
138. *Harivaṃśa*, II, 58; *Daśakumāracanta*, I, 14; VI, 149; VIII, 206.
139. Vākpati, *Gauḍavāho*, V, 305.
140. *Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa*, LXXXII, 10–18.
141. *Bhaviṣya Purāṇa*, II, 26; I, 39. *Samba Purāṇa*, 27, 28.
142. *Mahābhārata*, Anu Parva, XC, 11. *Manu*, III, 162.
143. *Bṛhatsamhitā*, LX, 19.
144. Maureen Patterson, 'Chitpavan Brahman Family Histories', in *Structure and Change in Indian Society*, Milton Singer and B. Cohn (eds), Chicago, 1968.

12

Indian Views of Europe

*Representations of the Yavanas in Early Indian History**

I would like to thank the South Asia Institute of the University of Heidelberg and Professor Lutze in particular, for the invitation to give a lecture in the series, 'Indian Views of Europe'. Having agreed happily to speak on Indian views of Europe and assuming that I was expected to relate this subject to my own field of work, namely, early Indian history, I discovered however that there were no readily available views on Europe from sources pertaining to early India. This then raised the interesting question of why was it that Indian travellers, merchants, officers, and monks who are known to have spent time in areas other than India, have left us no record of their impressions of the lands and peoples which they visited. It is therefore in many senses that I am using the word 'other' in this lecture.

The evidence that Indians visited and even settled in various parts of the then-known world is plentiful. This is so in spite of the injunction in the normative texts on social duty, the *dharmaśāstras*, against crossing the seas or living among those who do not practice the required rituals. Many of the cultural idioms of central Asia and south-east Asia are a clear manifestation of the transgression of this injunction. There is also evidence, although more scattered, of Indians in west Asia and the Mediterranean world.[1] Mention is made of embassies to Rome, of wealthy-merchants in Alexandria as well as of slaves,[2] and there is evidence of Indians at a Red Sea port.[3] Yet there is no attempt on the part of visiting Indians to describe what must have been alien worlds or at least narrate some fanciful stories of their adventures. This becomes all the more strange given the frequency with which those from the Greco-Roman world, or the Chinese for that matter wrote at length on India; and in their accounts there is an evident change from fantasy to more accurate description, although fantasy never fully falls away. Not only is there an absence of descriptions of others, but often the term used for a variety of other peoples remains the same, as we shall see. Indian interest in 'the other' seems to have been limited.

It becomes necessary therefore to ask the question why, for in the answer to this question something of the 'otherness' of both India and Europe might become more evident. Given the frequency of visitors from foreign lands to India, were they so taken for granted that accounts of such peoples seemed somehow redundant? Was there such a deep concern with the interior landscape that it annulled any curiosity about one's surroundings? Did it result from viewing the world as the geography of the isolate? Did the lack of an aggressive religious sense of mission and conversion, with an absence of the notion that the pagan and the infidel are inevitably damned, dull the enquiry about others? Did the cosmology of rebirth, open to all humans, blur the definitions between them? Or can one argue that the gradation of otherness is so implicit within the formulations of a caste society that distinctions even of a different kind carry less meaning? I would like to explore some of these ideas, keeping in mind our particular concern with Indian views of Europe.

Traditional views on the shape of the world are discussed in some detail in the *Purāṇas* and the *Mahābhārata* and the Buddhist texts, the relevant sections probably dating from the early centuries AD. These are largely fantasies, cosmographies, visions of the universe. Essential to the picture is the notion of the *dvīpa*, the term used for the four or the seven or the nine continents. The word literally means 'an island' and is used sometimes by extension to refer to a defined settlement such as a city or a country which need not actually be an island but where the sense of being apart is crucial. The notion of an island and of circularity governs the description of the universe. In one representation the central point is Mount Meru around which spread the four continents like the petals of a lotus, and these in turn are surrounded by oceans. This image incorporates the four quarters with the fifth point being in the centre. Later the number of continents was increased to seven.[4]

Conventionally, views of the universe envisage a concentric series of continents, *dvīpas*, separated by concentric oceans. Mount Meru lies at the core of the central continent, that of Jambūdvīpa (generally assumed to be referring to India) of which in some texts, Bhāratavarṣa is a part. The sense of a circular symmetry is predominant in such a 'map' and this is important to the world view of the *Purāṇas*, since these texts are concerned with cosmology, geography, narratives of creation and the genealogies of those who have ruled. In one of the versions we are further told that whereas the four *varṇas* or castes inhabit the centre of Bhāratavarṣa, there are other categories of people, other than *varṇas*, on the outskirts of the area: the *mleccha* are to be found all over and are therefore contrasted with the concentrated *varṇa* society in the centre; there are the mountain tribes of Kirātas on the east and on the west are the Yavanas.[5] The feeling of an island is reinforced not only by placing Jambudvīpa and Bhāratavarṣa in the centre but also by describing it as surrounded by those who are outside the pale of caste society, such as the *mlecchas*. It is in this sense that the vision of the universe supports the notion of Indian isolation.

The term *mleccha*, is crucial to the understanding of attitudes towards others. Such attitudes are often expressions of self-perception. An important dichotomy in social classification was the division into *ārya* and *mleccha*. This was not a dichotomy based on notions of biological race but essentially on language, although some Indologists, like others, have confused the two and race has now become the popular explanation. The fundamental differentiation was that of language.[6] Given the obsession with the power of sound in Vedic thinking, it was believed presumably that alien speech is incapable of capturing this power. It is described as the speech of the incoherent even if the difference is small. The *mleccha* therefore were those living along the frontiers of Indo-Aryan speech whose language was referred to as *mleccha-bhāṣā* because it was either mixed or different. But it also included those within the Indo-Aryan speech area who nevertheless spoke a different language or spoke an incorrect form of the Indo-Aryan language. The cultural frontier was therefore not a geographical one but demarcated by language.[7] Thus Patañjali, in the second century BC, stated in the introduction to his Sanskrit grammar that the study of the language prevents one from becoming a *mleccha*. As the spread of the language widened, the geographical definition of the land of the *āryas*, changed. Initially it was just the Ganga valley but later it came to include all the land between the Himalayas and the Vindhyas, wherever the black buck roamed.[8]

Mleccha also carried the connotation of impurity. Since they were unable to speak Sanskrit correctly, their recitation of the *mantras* was ineffectual and therefore they were unable to perform the required rituals. Lands and peoples not performing the rituals were unacceptable and those Indo-Aryan-speakers who visited such lands had to perform an expiatory rite on their return. This incidentally, did not inhibit large numbers from going to distant lands. In addition to being distinguished by their language, they were recognised by the organisation of society along the lines of the *varṇāśrama* ideal, i.e., observing the four orders of castes and the four stages of life. The *āryāvarta* is generally described as the land where the four *varṇas* are to be found. The *mlecchas* are often located outside this area in geographical terms and seen as forming parallel societies with their own language, ritual and custom. In some other contexts they were also ranked within the *varna* hierarchy as *śūdras* in the lowest rank.[9] Customary law as seen in the *dharmaśāstras* related to time, place and social status, and an impersonal code of laws applicable to all was not visualised. If anything laws and social obligations were a method of differentiating groups. Thus an *ārya* could not be sold into permanent slavery, whereas a *mleccha* could.[10] The *mleccha* therefore, was not primarily the object of aggression but of exclusion. The *mleccha* was the contrary of what constituted the *ārya*.

Among the *mleccha* are listed the Yavanas, a term used originally for the Greeks and later for all manner of people coming from west Asia—Hellenistic Greeks, people from the Greco-Roman Mediterranean, and eventually even the Arabs and the Europeans.[11] This makes it difficult to pin-point the references except that the earliest among them referred to the Greeks and Hellenised west Asians. To that extent they may be taken as a perspective on a culture which was significant to the evolution of Europe. The term Yavana appears to have its root in the Greek *Ione*, the Iranian *yauna*,[12] and the Prākṛit *yona*, which according to some gave rise to the Sanskrit *yavana*. Others with whom the Yavana were frequently associated are the Kāmboja and the Śaka (Scythian), both geographically contiguous on the one hand, and the Kirāṭa, Śabara and other *barbara* or barbarian peoples who were included among the *mleccha* on the other.[13] Nevertheless a subtle distinction is maintained between the first category and the second. The Yavana and the Śaka are said to observe a limited *dharma* and some rules of purity and are not therefore totally excluded from contact with the higher castes.[14] The Yavana are complimented not only on being valiant but very knowledgeable and therefore different from the other *mleccha*. But *mleccha* they remain,[15] and this despite the gradual and growing proximity with the Hellenistic Greeks and those of the Mediterranean.

The earliest close experience which the Indians had of the Greeks began badly with the campaign of Alexander of Macedon in north-western India, accompanied by the brutalisation inherent in such campaigns particularly in the repression of resistance.[16] Alexander's hostility towards the *brāhmaṇas* is mentioned more than once, for he believed that they were responsible for instigating opposition to him.[17] A result of this campaign was the rise of Hellenistic kingdoms in west Asia and the opening of commerce between these areas and India. The Mauryan emperors received ambassadors bringing gifts of sweet wine and dried figs.[18] In return Aśoka states that he sent his missions bearing the message of *dhamma* to the Greek kings, the *yona rājās* on the frontiers.[19] The proximity was strengthened by the inclusion in the Mauryan empire of parts of Afghanistan where Greek and Aramaic speaking populations necessitated versions of the Aśokan edicts in these languages.

Observations on Hellenistic society are few but these are of some interest. Aśoka in his edicts refers to the absence of *brāhmaṇas* and *śramaṇas* in the Yona country.[20] We are told elsewhere that the first Buddhist missions were sent to these kingdoms during the reign of Aśoka.[21] Equally significant is what appears to be Aśoka's interest in the religion and ethics of these societies.[22] The use of the word *eusebeia* for the Prākṛit *dhamma* (Sanskrit *dharma*) in the Greek version of the Major Rock Edicts at Kandahar, is also suggestive of a sensitivity to the use of the appropriate term and of some familiarity perhaps with Greek thought, even if the rendering into Greek was done by a local scribe.[23] Yet there is no evidence of the learning of Greek by Indian scholars. Yavana is mentioned in the grammar of Pāṇini and is later glossed as a reference to the Greek script.[24] Curiously none of the Indian grammarians seem to have been interested in the Greek language, or else we might have had a theory of parallels and Indo-European origins many centuries prior to William Jones and Max Müller! This reticence seems strange given the centrality of language and grammar in the intellectual discourse of learned Indians at that time. Possibly it was because Greek was regarded as the language of the impure in the social hierarchy and the study of such languages was discouraged.[25] Since the Yavanas were anyway using Prākṛit there was perhaps no great necessity for Indians to learn Greek. Yet prior to this Aśoka Maurya felt it necessary to issue versions of his edicts in Greek and Aramaic for the people of the north-west. The familiarity with Aramaic seems to have been greater, the *kharoṣṭhī* script having evolved from Aramaic.

The Yavanas, however, became problematical for the theory of identity within a social hierarchy, as it was worked out in the Sanskrit normative texts. Subsequent to the Mauryas, in the second century BC, the Hellenistic Greeks of west Asia, conquered and briefly ruled over north-western India and inched their way to areas regarded earlier as the heartland in the Ganga plain.[26] Referred to by present-day historians as Indo-Greeks, they established centres at cities such as Taxila, Kandahar[27] and Sagala (modern Sialkot?). Indo-Greek coins carry bilingual legends in Greek and Prakṛit with symbols attesting the faith of the rulers in Buddhism and the newly emerging Śaiva and Bhāgavata cults. Inscriptions were issued in Prākṛit by the Indo-Greeks: one from Madhya Pradesh was inscribed by Heliodorus, the Greek ambassador from Taxila to a local court, in which he records his devotion to the Vaiṣṇava cult of Vāsudeva.[28] The text of this inscription is influenced by Sanskrit, suggesting that the Indo-Greeks did make an attempt to use the local language but failed to communicate in Sanskrit as the normative texts would have preferred. However the distinction of language seems by now to have been largely a notional divide which probably would have persisted even if the Greeks had used Sanskrit. Sanskrit had itself undergone change and this would have raised the question of which variety of Sanskrit was to be considered the hallmark of the *ārya*. Patronage of Buddhism, regarded as heretical by *brāhmaṇas* and of the Bhāgavata cult of Vāsudeva, may have been largely political since these were popular religious sects in that part of the country. If coinage is to provide clues then it would seem that the Indo-Greeks were anxious to incorporate Indian cultural signals, even if some kings assumed a predominantly Greek identity in giving prominence to the royal portrait, the monogram and other Greek features.[29]

The art which emerged by the turn of the Christian era, commonly referred to as Gandhara art, draws on these relationships. If art expresses an identity, then Gandhara art has to be seen not only as the fusion of styles—Greco-Bactrian, Roman, Indian—but also as an experiment in identity: an experiment in seeing one's own culture as the other. From the Indian perspective the themes and their meanings were familiar, the representation was different. But since culture is not static, this very representation became a legitimate part of the self-perception of the Indian. To the citizen of Taxila there would be little that was alien in this art.[30]

Although they were rulers, there was a problem about fitting the Yavanas into the caste hierarchy. From the perspective of the normative texts, the *dharmaśāstras*, in terms of the social hierarchy of *varṇa*, the Yavanas as a *mleccha* people had to be given the status of the low caste, the *śūdras*. There was a concession, however, in that they were not the lowest among these. The sop to the Yavanas is the statement that they were originally *kṣatriyas* but because they omitted to perform the sacred rites prescribed by the *brāhmaṇas* they had had to be lowered to the status of *śūdras*, or of *vrātya-kṣatriyas*, literally degenerate *kṣatriyas*.[31]

This in turn required some narration of their supposed Indian origin. Lineage ancestry was invented when it was said that the Yavanas were the descendants of Turvaśa, a son of Yayāti.[32] Even though little is said about this son, Yayāti himself, being a major ancestral figure, gave some credibility to the ancestry of the Yavanas. The other sons of Yayāti were the famous Yadu, from whom the important *kṣatriya* families of the Yādavas were descended, and Pūru, who was the progenitor of the Pauravas whose line terminated in the heroes of the *Mahābhārata*. These were well-established *kṣatriya* lineages; they were the stock from which the earliest ruling clans claimed kinship and from which later dynasties were to seek genealogical links. However, the statement that Turvaśa was the ancestor of the Yavanas was not so complimentary. Turvaśa, who refuses to give up his youth in exchange for his father's old age, is cursed by his father to produce offspring who will face extinction, but before which they will rule over people whose customs are corrupt, who contradict the rules of caste, who are eaters of flesh, who lust after the wives of their *gurus* and who couple with beasts—in short the worst of the barbarians.[33] Later the same text states that the Yavanas were degraded as *śūdras* together with the Drāviḍas, Kaliṅgas, and Śakas.[34] It adds that they can be admitted to 'the society of the *ārya* only if they follow' the *varṇāśramadharma*. Some *dharmaśāstras* maintained that the Yavanas were the progeny of a *kṣatriya* male and a *śūdra* female and being of mixed caste, were therefore of low status.[35] Clearly there was a problem about status and Yavana was not easily placed in the caste hierarchy. The definition of the term, either as part of the *varṇa* hierarchy or as an ethnic group, remained ambiguous, perhaps largely because the same term was applied to so many categories of people.

Texts dealing with subjects at a technical level indicate an interest in Greek ideas among professionals. That there was a familiarity with Greek astronomy and astrology, for example, is evident from the titles of the texts referred to.[36] Varāhamihira, a sixth-century astronomer, is appreciative of Greek astrology even if he holds different views and remarks that although the Yavanas were *mlecchas*, nevertheless they should be regarded as sages in this study, if not even as *brāhmaṇas*.[37] It is interesting that the Hellenistic Greeks were seen as more proficient in astrology rather than astronomy.

A notable exception to accommodating the Yavanas was one category of texts which is both aggressive and uncompromising in its depiction of them. The *Purāṇas*, compiled much after the rule of the Yavanas although incorporating earlier material, are generally hostile to the Yavanas. Historical events are often narrated in them in the future tense although they may refer to events which had already taken place. Thus the *Yugapurāṇa*, a work on astrology dating to the turn of the Christian era, states that the Yavanas will conquer the Ganga plain, causing disorder and extensive warfare, and according to one reading, will oppress the people and massacre women and children. They will however, not remain in the area because of internal strife among them.[38] Other *Purāṇas* of a later period, echo this sentiment and state that the Yavanas, although not legitimate kings, will nevertheless rule because of the evil accruing in the last of the four ages, the Kaliyuga, the age of ethical and moral decline. One text has a millennarian message in stating that they will be annihilated by the last of the incarnations of Viṣṇu, Kalkin, at the end of the Kali age, although by now the term Yavana included people other than just the Indo-Greeks.[39]

Yet another text projects an altogether negative image of the Kālayavana, the Black Greek.[40] The Black Greek was born of an *apsarā* or celestial maiden and a *ṛṣi* or sage: the archetypal parentage of many Indian heroes. But the Black Greek, together with his allies of the north-west, attacked the city of Mathura, gave chase to Kṛṣṇa, and impetuously kicked a sleeping sage, who on thus being rudely woken up reacted angrily and reduced the Black Greek to ashes. A variant on this story is narrated in the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa*.[41] The association is with violence and there is a death wish directed towards the enemy. It has been argued that the story of Kālayavana is an attempt at Indian self-definition and the expression of neobrahmanism which was to be the consensual basis of subsequent kingdoms.[42] Perhaps it would be more precise to describe it as Brahmanical self-definition in the light of the Kṛṣṇa cult associated with Mathura and soon to become important. In the story there is hostility between the Yavanas and Kṛṣṇa, whereas in fact some Yavanas were patrons of the Vāsudeva cult.

Was this also a telescoping of the past, where perhaps the social memory of Alexander's campaign was collapsed into the more recent events associated with the Indo-Greeks? Or was it a fulsome resentment against the *mleccha* conquerors on the part of the *brāhmaṇa* authors of these texts, the resentment being in part a memory of Alexander's reputed hostility to the *brāhmaṇas*.[43] This was compounded by the Brahmanical suspicion of urban traders and Yavanas who were not rulers or administrators but were city dwellers occupied in commerce. There is also implicit in these statements a sense of hopelessness that the world did not function according to the social rules promulgated by the *brāhmaṇas*. As long as the Yavanas remain along the borders they are tolerated, but when they enter the heartland, then the resentment is uncontrolled. There is the inevitable wish for the coming of the millennium, when the mythical figure of Kalkin will destroy the *mleccha*, the upstarts, and the low castes, and restore the order of *varṇa* and the rules of the normative texts. The alienation of language and custom was evidently deeply resented by Brahmanical authors even though in terms of geography the definition of Bhāratavarṣa now included the north-western region of Gandhāra.[44] By now the term Yavana referred not only to the Greeks but also to other peoples beyond the north-west of India.

Implicit in the *brāhmaṇa* hostility to the Yavanas was also the fact that the Yavanas were substantial patrons of the various Buddhist sects who by now were regarded as heretics by the *brāhmaṇas*. Doubtless a mixture of contempt and envy governed this attitude, a particular irritant being that Buddhism was receiving support from the *mleccha* elite which helped consolidate its strength. Similarly patronage of Śaiva and Bhāgavata sects was also a new feature. The polemic against the Yavanas by *brāhmaṇa* authors can therefore be seen as a part of the polemic against dissidents in India.

Not surprisingly the Buddhist view of the Yavanas was rather different, a view which perhaps goes back to the Buddha's attitude to Yavana society, which was one of curiosity and interest. A comment attributed to the Buddha states that the society of the Yona and the neighbouring Kamboja was constituted of only two *varṇas*, the *ārya* and the *dāsa*. The former term has been variously rendered as master or citizen and the latter as slave.

The Buddha adds that individuals could change their status from one to the other.[45] The Buddha uses this information to question the social superiority claimed by the *brāhmaṇas*. Was this his perception of Hellenistic society or was it a reflection on descriptions of the Greek city state? Either way it may suggest that there was a deeper familiarity with things essentially Greek than is ostensibly expressed in the Indian sources. The definition of *ārya* in this case is different from that of Brahmanical thought for here, as in Buddhist texts generally, it refers to those who were worthy of honour, or thought of with respect. Again the connotation is not racial. That the *ārya* and the *dāsa* were changeable statuses and were not dependent on birth emphasises that this society was not a caste society. Where references are made to Yavanas as *mleccha* (or *milakkha* in Pali), they are said to be of high status even though they spoke an alien language.[46] Buddhist texts seem unconcerned with emphasis on ritual purity or status determined by *varṇa* ranking.

The Yavana patronage of Buddhism in the north was that of kings who bestowed largesse on the Buddhist *saṅgha* or Order, and assisted in the building of monasteries, *stūpas* and other places of worship. Apart from this there were extensive trading networks which were furthered by the co-operation between merchant and monk and which used the protection of political authority. The epitome of the relationship between Buddhism and Yavana royalty lies in the famous text, the *Milindapañha*, in which the Greek king Menander is supposed to have posed questions to the monk Nāgasena on Buddhist doctrine. This was an oral discourse which it is claimed led to the conversion of Menander. Menander was chosen doubtless because he was the most powerful of the Indo-Greek kings. The text was meant to demonstrate ascendancy not only over the Yavanas but over a man with an enquiring mind. Menander is said to harass the brethren by putting puzzles to them of a heretical kind.[47] There is little evidence that Menander was regarded as a *mleccha* and therefore to be treated as an inferior. The questions posed are those of the intelligent layman, but interestingly Menander asks for the physical manifestation of the Buddha whereas Nāgasena keeps discussion at the level of the abstract. This could be the layman's problem of belief and proof of belief, but could it also be read as an indication of a Greek interest in empirical evidence? Menander however, when quoting evidence in support of his *kṣatriya* ancestry, which in this text is never doubted, refers to symbols of power which were recognisably Indian.

References to the Yavanas in the Deccan register a shift from political authority to a concentration on trade. This in part may be because most of these Yavanas were traders from the Mediterranean and likely to have come from centres such as Petra, Coptos, Alexandria, Myos Hormuz, Berenice and other places along the Red Sea, and to a lesser extent traders from the north-west with links to Palmyra and other commercial entrepôts overland and further west. The trade was largely maritime. The sailing of ships was dependent on the monsoon winds which carried them along mid-ocean routes across the Arabian Sea instead of the earlier and lengthier coastal looping. Sailing with the summer monsoon winds required returning with the winter monsoon and this in turn necessitated having to live for a few months in India awaiting the winter monsoon. Indian ships, it has been suggested, sailed only to Arabian ports and east Africa.[48] Consequently the merchandise from the Mediterranean came, when sent by sea, in ships from the Red Sea. The ship would be manned by a crew likely to have come from the eastern Mediterranean or picked up from the ports of the Red Sea. Some of such crews may have settled in various parts of the Indian peninsula.

Mention is made of wealthy Yavanas who appear to have been traders and their votive inscriptions are recorded at various Buddhist sacred centres. Some, at sites in the western Deccan, are referred to by their Indian names, which indicate that they were Buddhists.[49] It is unlikely that these were wealthy Indian merchants living in west Asia, as has been suggested,[50] for Indians of standing would not have accepted the label of Yavana, which would have reduced them to *mleccha* status. That some Greeks took Indian names is evident from an inscription which refers to a Theodoras Datiaputra.[51] The rock-cut monasteries at Nasik also record handsome donations from the Yavana, Indragnidatta, the son of Dhammadeva, who is further described as the northerner from Dattamitri, perhaps the Demetrias in Arachosia.[52] At Junnar in the same area, Yavana donors are said to come from Gata, which could be a Prakritised version of Coptos.[53] It has been argued that these donations by the Yavanas were attempts to participate in the cultural distinctiveness of the Buddhist trading diaspora on which the Yavanas were dependent.[54] That Yavanas were converted to Buddhism is claimed by the Ceylon Chronicles, which speak of Buddhist missionaries going to the Yona country and mention that thirty thousand monks came from there to attend the foundation ceremony of a major *stūpa* in Sri Lanka.[55] The number of monks seems exaggerated, but there must have been some ministering to the needs of Buddhists in the Yona country. It is curious that a Yona/Yavana monk was sent to Aparānta, the western extremity of India, where presumably Greek was spoken, yet a non-Yavana monk was sent to the Yavana country.

Further south, Tamil Sangam literature has references to the Yavanas with whom the people of south India came into contact. These give a rather different picture from the previous two. We are told of the flourishing port at Muciri/Muziris on the Kerala coast, where the large, beautiful ships of the Yavanas dock, laden with gold, and from where they return home with pepper, which the Yavanas loved.[56] Mention is also made of the cool, fragrant wine brought by the Yavanas in elegant jars,[57] an item which was to become a regular import into India from the west. Other verses carry a more hostile tone: the local Cera king is said to have captured the barbarous Yavanas of harsh speech, tied them up and taken away their elegant jars and their wealth.[58] Perhaps it was because of the harshness of their language that they were on occasion referred to as the *milecchar*, evidently a form of *mleccha*.

On the opposite coast, in Tamilnadu at Kaveripattinam, the Yavanas were not just passing visitors picking up items of trade, but had settled in ports and towns practising a variety of professions. The Pandyan ruler was said to employ the Yavanas as bodyguards because they were sharp-eyed, of fearsome appearance, strong, and used to cracking whips.[59] Were these the weather-toughened sailors off the Yavana ships who had decided to abandon sailing on the monsoon-tossed seas and settle in the tropical lands where they had been beached? Yavanas seemed to have been preferred as body-guards, perhaps because they were not embroiled in local factions. It is thought that even in the sculpture of later centuries at temples in the Deccan, the guardians at the gateways were sometimes depicted as Yavanas.[60]

Perhaps emphasis was laid on physical prowess in the Śangam literature in part because heroic poetry eulogises such attainments. Literature, of a somewhat later period, describes a variety of Yavana craftsmen making lamps, boxes, flowers of gold, and items of carpentry, in all of which the craftsmanship is extolled: a compliment indeed coming from a society with high standards of craftsmanship.[61] But above all it is the wealth of the Yavanas which is commented upon: they live in a separate section of the city in houses which are easily distinguishable.[62] Doubtless the impression of wealth can be traced back to the circulation and later hoarding of large numbers of gold and silver coins of the early Roman emperors, which had been brought to south India as part of the trade—coins which were used as bullion, as high-value currency and possibly also as part of a system of gift-exchange among those groups where such exchange was still more significant than trade.[63] The tenor of these descriptions is matched by the excavation at Arikamedu near Pondicherry. Here a settlement of the earlier period and manufacturing site linked to the Roman trade, carries traces of a variety of objects from amphorae to pottery, glass, beads, lamps and other items, some of which had Indian imitations. Among the many items brought in from the Roman trade was the valuable red coral of the Mediterranean which was believed to be a talisman against ill-health and dangers in the Greco-Roman world and was used in India for the same purpose.[64]

The context of trade and of Buddhism provides a different perspective on the attitude to the Yavanas. They may be referred to as socially excluded even in the early Buddhist texts before there was much contact with them,[65] but with the growth of trade relations they are, on the contrary, considered people of status, especially where they make lavish donations. The votive inscriptions and Indian names suggest, of course, that the earlier statement about their alien language was no longer entirely true. Tamil sources comment on the language but otherwise are even less concerned about Yavana ritual status or caste and merely describe the people as they saw them. There are therefore, distinctly different attitudes towards the Yavanas depending on who is viewing them and in what context. Where the Yavana is a symbol of political authority and there is competition for this authority, and where the arena is one in which the society is visualised in terms of caste categories closely deriving from notions of *varṇa*, there the Yavana is an excluded group in spite of periods of successful political control. Interest in the 'other' is absent when the Indian is on the homeground of the other, but when the 'other' comes to India there is a range of comment.

The term Yavana was not, however, restricted to the Greeks, and the people of the eastern Mediterranean. It continued to be used for others who came from the west—for the Arabs, and for those from the direction of Afghanistan, and sometimes even for those Indians who had converted to Islam.[66] Was this due to a lack of interest in political changes in north-west India and west Asia? Or was it that, with the gradual decline of Buddhism and Jainism the ideologies of Brahmanism gained ascendancy and all those who were outside the language and caste identity were described as *mleccha* while those who came from the western borders and regions were automatically regarded as Yavana? Thus the sense of the term was extended over time to include more recent people, an extension which might even have continued into our times, but for the intervention of the colonial experience which among other things, fractured the past.

It was the colonial experience which also led to variant modern views on how the Indians saw the Greeks. This further endorses the point that all such views depend on who is speaking to whom about what. The European perception of the Yavanas was different from the Indian nationalist perception. W.W. Tarn, for example, compares the Indo-Greeks to the British administering an Indian empire. In his theory of partnership between the Greeks and the Indians he is almost echoing one strand of late British colonial policy in India, which also harped on partnership when the empire was visibly coming to an end. A contrary view is presented by Radha Kumud Mukherjee. When assessing Alexander in India he writes that his campaign resulted in 'untold sufferings inflicted on India—massacre, rapine, plunder on a scale till then without a precedent in her annals, but repeated in later days by more successful invaders like Sultan Mahmud, Tamerlane and Nadir Shah.'[67] At a subconscious level the list is a recitation of the evil Yavanas in keeping with the image projected in the *Purāṇas*.

The Indian experience of the Yavanas and perspectives on them however, should obviously not be compared to those of European colonialism. Unlike the Yavanas, European colonialism did not involve settlement in India, and the Europeans did not attempt to integrate themselves with things Indian, their primary purpose being to exploit the economy through political ascendancy. The British did not come to India from a contiguous state, but from a geographically distant area. The frontier therefore was a distant one. Difference in speech and custom was recognised but colonialism required that the colonised speak the language of the colonial power. In the dichotomy of Indian and European there are some echoes of *ārya* and *mleccha*, but the adoption of English as the elite language and, subsequent to the emergence of the Indian middle class, the observance of 'western' social custom and law, inverted its form. This inversion may be at the root of many tensions in contemporary perceptions of modernisation where new ideologies which question earlier dichotomies are either appropriated in such a way as to create new dichotomies or else are used as a polemic against dissidents in Indian society.

Whatever the reality may have been, early Indian writers persistently called those who came from the west, Yavanas. This then became a code name, encapsulating a long tradition of attitudes, of acceptance and rejection at various levels and in various ways among various groups of Indians. It was not that the differences between the Greeks, the Arabs and the Europeans were imperceptible or unclear to Indian thought, but that there was a deliberate use of a label, a category which identified such peoples along a social continuum which did not have to be worked out each time. That the Yavanas were *mleccha* meant that they spoke a different language and were assigned a low or an ambiguous caste as far as the *brāhmaṇas* were concerned but were acceptable to the Buddhists and assimilated into Buddhist society. The predicates which constituted such a name and the codes underpinning it would remain constant, even if the actuality of relations changed.[68]

I have tried to suggest that the *brāhmaṇas* and the Buddhists constructed the Yavanas in different ways and have offered possible explanations. The Brahmanical view would prefer to see the Yavanas as the opposite of their own status and culture yet at the same time they were required to see the Yavanas within a framework of a social continuum—a gradual gradation of castes and customs—which is inimical to polarities. The view may therefore be intended to be hostile but has to be nuanced as well. Whereas formally the dichotomy between *ārya* and *mleccha* and therefore between the *ārya* and the Yavana is stated, in effect it was often eluded. Even the switch from a geographical identity to a cultural one is not consistent and often wavers between the two. There was an ongoing need for the image of the alien. This could be notional—hence the recurrent Yavana and *mleccha*. The 'other' is not necessarily confrontational, but is a part of a continuum and therefore needs to be demarcated.

The Brahmanical polemic against the Yavana is not directed only against what we today see as the alien; it is as much a part of the polemic within Indian society and thought directed by those anxious to acquire and maintain power against those in opposition.[69] Representations of the Yavanas as the other were also representations of some Indians in early historical times.

Notes and References

* Lecture delivered at the South Asia Institute, at Heidelberg University, 1987, in the series entitled 'Indian Views of Europe'.

1. A very late tradition refers to an Indian gymnosophist at Athens in conversation with Socrates, but this, as has been pointed out, is a quotation twice-removed and historically uncertain. J. Sedlar, *India and the Greek World*, New Jersey, 1980, pp. 14ff; K. Karttunen, *India in Early Greek Literature*, Studia Orientalia No. 65, Helsinki, 1989, pp. 108ff.
2. W. Schmitthenner, 'Rome and India: Aspects of Universal History during the Principate', *The Journal of Roman Studies*, 1979, LXIX, pp. 90–106. S. Levi, 'Alexander and Alexandria in Indian Literature', *Indian Historical Quarterly*, 1936, XII, 1, pp. 121–33.
3. D. Whitcomb and J. Johnson, *Quseir al-Qadim*, Princeton, 1979, p. 18. S.E. Sidebotham, *Roman Economic Policy in the Erythra Thalassa, 30 BC–AD 217*, Leiden, 1986.
4. Rai Krishnadas, 'Puranic Geography of the Cātur-dvipas', *Purana*, 1959, 1, pp. 202ff; B.H. Kapadia, 'The Four World Oceans and the Dvipa Theory of the Middle Ages', *Purana*, 1961, 3, 2, pp. 215–21; *Mahābhārata*, 12.14.21ff; *Matsya Purāṇa*, 113.43–4; 114.121–3; *Vāyu Purāṇa*, 34.45–6; 42–5; *Viṣṇu Purāṇa*, II.2; II.3.1–19.
5. *Matsya Purāṇa*, 114.11; V.S. Agrawala, *Matsya Purana, a Study*, Varanasi, 1963, p. 193.
6. The earliest reference to *mleccha* in the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*, 3.2.1.23–4 makes this clear where it states that they were unable to pronounce Sanskrit correctly, *te'surā āttavacaso he'lavo he'lava iti vadantaḥ pārābabhūbuḥ* ...
7. This can be compared to the Greek reference to *barabaros* as being those who spoke an incomprehensible language, therefore the barbarian was demarcated by language. Sanskrit also has a phrase, *barbara/balbala karoti*, to signify those who speak indistinctly. R. Thapar, 'The Image of the Barbarian in Early India', in *Ancient Indian Social History: Some Interpretations*, New Delhi, 1978, pp. 152–92. See chapter 11 in this volume.
8. P.V. Kane, *History of Dharmasastra*, vol. II, 1, pp. 11ff; see also *Matsya Purāṇa*, 114.10ff; *Viṣṇu Purāṇa*, 2.3.2–5; A.M. Shastri, *India as Seen in the Bṛhatsamhitā of Varāhamihira*, Delhi, 1969, pp. 45ff.
9. Manu, 2.23; 10.45; Gautama, *Dharmaśāstra*, 4.4–21; Baudhāyana *Dharmaśāstra*, 1.9.3–15; Vasiṣṭha, 18.1–18.
10. *Arthaśāstra*, 3.13.3–4.
11. The same term is used for those of African descent except that they are called *kālayavanas* or black Yavanas as in the reference to people from the island of the black Yavanas, possibly a reference to Madagascar. Dandin, *Daśakumāracarita* (ed. G. Buhler, BSS X), Bombay, 1887, p. 8.
12. As in the Behistun Inscription of Darius, 522–486 BC. D.C. Sircar, *Select Inscriptions*, I, pp. 4–5; A.K. Narain, *The Indo-Greeks*, Delhi, 1980 (reprint), pp. 165–9; W.W. Tarn, *The Greeks in Bactria and India*, London, 1951

(reprint, 1980), pp. 416ff; C. Tottossy, 'The Name of the Greeks in Ancient India', *Acta Antiqua Hungarica*, 1955, 3, pp. 301–19.

13. *Mahābhārata*, 7.95.37–9.
14. Patañjali on Pāṇini, 2.4.10.
15. *Mahābhārata*, 8.30.80.
16. Arrian, *Anabasis*, 4.27.3ff; 5.24.5–8; 6.11.3ff.
17. Arrian, *Anabasis*, 6.7.4–6; 6.16.5; 6.17.2. That *brāhmaṇas* could take up arms to protect themselves is evident from the *Baudhāyana Dharmaśāstra*, 2.2.4.16–18.
18. R. Thapar, *Aśoka and the Decline of the Mauryas*, Oxford, 1961, pp. 17–18.
19. J. Bloch, *Les Inscriptions d'Asoka*, 1950, Paris, pp. 130ff.
20. J. Bloch, *Les Inscriptions d'Asoka*, p. 128.
21. *Mahāvaṃsa*, 12.4–5. The monk Yona Dhammarakkhita was sent to Aparānta, the western extremity of India, and the monk Mahārakkhita to Yonadesa. Interestingly, the Yona has an Indian name, presumably in this case because he was a Buddhist monk trained in India.
22. D. Schlumberger, L. Robert, A. Dupont–Sommer, E. Benveniste, 'Une bilingue greco-araméenne d'Asoka', *Journale Asiatique*, 1958, i, pp. 1–48ff; J. Filliozat, *Epigraphia Indica*, 34, pp. 1ff; In the Aramaic version of the inscription at Kandahar, Aśoka refers to what has been read as the Day of Judgement, a notion associated with the Zoroastrians at that time.
23. D. Schlumberger, 'Une nouvelle inscription grecque d'Asoka', *Comptes rendus des seances de l'Academie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres*, 1964, pp. 1–15; E. Benveniste, 'Edits d'Asoka en traduction grecque', *Journal Asiatique*, 1964, pp. 137–57; *Epigraphia Indica*, 37, pp. 193ff.
24. S.C. Vasu (ed.), *The Aṣṭādhyāyī of Pāṇini*, 4.1.49. The text of Kātyāyaṇa glosses it as *yavanānilipi*.
25. Vasiṣṭha, 6.41; Gautama, 9.16–17.
26. *Mahābhāṣya* (ed. Kielhorn), 2.118–19.
27. Kandahar has been variously identified with Dattamitri/Demetrias in Arachosia or as the Alexandria in Arachosia. Dattamitri is mentioned as a town in the Sauvira region in the *Mahābhārata*, 1.139, 21–3, but this is believed to be a later interpolation and has therefore been omitted from the Critical Edition of the text. The identity of Kandahar with the town of Demetrias is discussed in P.M. Fraser, 'The Son of Aristonax at Kandahar', *Afghan Studies*, 1979 (1980), 2, pp. 9–21.
28. D.C. Sircar, *Select Inscriptions ...*, Calcutta, 1965, pp. 88–9, 100–11.
29. R. Audouin and P. Bernard, 'Tresor de monnais indienes et indo-grecque d'Aī Khanoum (Afghanistan)', part I, *Rev. Num.*, 1973, XV, pp. 238ff; *Rev. Num.*, part II, *Rev. Num.*, 1974, XVI, pp. 7ff.
30. L. Nehru, *Origins of the Gandharan Style*, Delhi, 1989, pp. 65ff, although not centrally concerned with the question of identity, does discuss the differences

between artistic expression in Hellenistic west Asia, Bactria and Gandhara, in terms of the inheritance from the past.

31. Manu, 10.43–4.
32. *Mahābhārata*, 1.80.26.
33. *Mahābhārata*, 1.79, 11–13.
34. *Mahābhārata*, 13.33.19–21.
35. Gautama, 4.21.
36. Such as the Romaka (Rome) and Pauliśa (Paul of Alexandria?) systems and the *Yavana-jātaka*. P.V. Kane, *History of Dharmasastra*, v, pp. 563ff.
37. *Bṛhatsamhitā*, II.15.
38. The *Yugapurāṇa* is a section of the *Gargīya-jyotiṣa*, and the manuscripts have variant readings. These have been discussed by D.C. Sircar, 'Problems of the Yugapurana', in D.C. Sircar, *Studies in Yugapurana and Other Texts*, Delhi, 1974, pp. 1–17; and more recently by J.E. Mitchner, *The Yuga Purana*, Calcutta, 1986.
39. *Vāyu Purāṇa*, 1.58.81–3; 2.37.106–9.
40. *Harivaṃśa* (ed. P.L. Vaidya), *BORI*, Poona, 1969, 25.8–27; 80.1–8.
41. *Viṣṇu Purāṇa*, V.23–4.
42. N. Hein, 'Kalayavana, a Key to Mathura's Cultural Self-Perception', in D.M. Srinivasan (ed.), *Mathura*, Delhi, 1989, pp. 223–35. Alberuni in the eleventh century refers to Kālayavana as an era associated with oppressive rule. E.C. Sachau, *Alberuni's India*, Delhi, 1964 (reprint), II. p. 5.
43. Plutarch, 69.
44. *Vāyu Purāṇa*, 1.45.80–3; *Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa*, 57.7–9.
45. *Majjhima Nikāya*, 2.149–50. In the Greek cities of west Asia, citizenship was open to the Greeks and to Hellenised non-Greeks both of whom formed the upper levels of society. Less privileged persons tended to use their own language and religions and formed a different community. R.J. van der Spek, 'The Babylonian City', in A. Kuhrt and S. Sherwin-White (eds), *Hellenism in the East*, London, 1987, pp. 57–74.
46. *Sumaṅgala-vilāsinī*, I.276ff.
47. *Milindapañha*, 1.14.(1.29). W.W. Tarn suggests that this text is based on a number of Greek accounts of Alexander's dialogues with Indian sophists and a proto-type of such texts was the *Letter of Pseudo-Aristeas*, involving Ptolemy II in a discourse with Jewish Elders. *The Greeks in Bactria and India*, Delhi, 1980 (reprint), pp. 424ff. To argue for such a proto-type seems unnecessary given that most proselytising religions have such catechismal texts.
48. I. Miller, *The Spice Trade of the Roman Empire*, Oxford, 1969, pp. 180ff.
49. J. Burgess and B. Indraji, *Inscriptions from the Cave Temples of Western India*, Varanasi, 1976 (reprint), nos 7, 10. pp. 31–2. *Epigraphia Indica*, VII, nos 7 and 10, pp. 53–5.

50. W.W. Tarn, *The Greeks in Bactria and India*, Delhi, 1980 (reprint), pp. 371ff.
51. S. Konow, *Corpus Inscriptionum Indicarum*, II.1, Kharoshthi Inscriptions, Varanasi, 1969 (reprint), no. 24, p. 65.
52. *Epigraphia Indica*, 1905–6, VIII, no. 18, pp. 90–1.
53. Burgess and Indraji, *Inscriptions from the Cave Temples of Western India*, nos 4 and 33, pp. 42 and 55. Gata has generally been identified with Trigarta in northern India, either Jallandhar or Kangra, neither of which however has produced much in the way of evidence of Greek settlement at this time. On the analogy of Sandracottos and Candragupta, it may be possible to suggest that the Prākṛit form Gata, could be derived from Coptos.
54. Himanshu P. Ray, 'The Yavana Presence in Ancient India', *JESHO*, 1988, XXXI, pp. 311–25.
55. *Mahāvaṃsa*, XII.34–5; 39–40; XXIX.39. *Dīpavaṃsa*, VIII.7.
56. Akam, 149.V.7–11, trans. K. Zvelibil, see also N. Subrahmanian, *Pre-Pallavan Tamil Index*, Madras, 1966, p. 716.
57. *Pre-Pallavan Tamil Index*, Puram, 56.16–21; Puram, 343.1–10.
58. *Pre-Pallavan Tamil Index*, Patirrupattu, II, patikam, v.4–10.
59. *Pre-Pallavan Tamil Index*, Mullaippattu, v.59–61.
60. J.C. Harle, 'Two Yavana Dvārapālas at Aihole', in the *K.A. Nilakantha Sastri Felicitation Volume*, Madras, 1971, pp. 210ff.
61. *Manimekalai*, XIX, v.108.
62. *Śilappadhikaram*, 5.10; 14.67.
63. M.G. Raschke, 'New Studies in Roman Commerce with the East', in H. Temporim and W. Hasse (eds), *Aufsteig und Niedergang der Romischer Welt*, Berlin, 1978.
64. G.W.B. Huntingford (ed. and trans.), *The Periplus of the Erythraean Sea*, London, 1980, chs 28, 39, 49, 56.
65. G.P. Malalasekhara, *Dictionary of Pali Proper Names*, II, p. 636; *Sammohavinodani*, Vibhanga Commentary, 388; *Suttanipāta*, 977.
66. As for example, the reference to Hushanga Gori as a Yavana-Śaka, or to Behari as a Yavana, since he was the adopted son of Salaha, originally a *brāhmaṇa* but converted to Islam. D.R. Bhan, 'Khadavada Inscription of the Time of Ghiyas Shah Khilji of Mandu', *Journal of the Bombay Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society*, XXIII, pp. 12ff; see also Kalhaṇa, *Rājataraṅginī*, 8.2264.
67. *The Age of Imperial Unity*, in *History and Culture of the Indian People*, II, Bombay, 1951, p. 51.
68. F. Hartog, *The Mirror of Herodotus*, Berkeley, 1988.
69. Such polemics are of course frequently found in many societies. Thus the accounts of Alexander's dialogues with Indian gymnosophists was a recurring theme in Greek and Latin texts. Given the paucity of authentic evidence for

such a dialogue, it has been plausibly argued that these 'events' were used and re-used for purposes of local polemics pertaining to the discussion on relations between the king and the philosopher, to the debate touching on the Cynics and the Stoics as well as the later one on the life-style of the Christian monks. Sedlar, *India and the Greek World*, pp. 68ff, 279ff. Karttunen, *India in Early Greek Literature*, pp. 108ff.

13

Black Gold

South Asia and the Roman Maritime Trade*

The writing of the early history of South Asia has been largely land-locked. Major studies of the Indian Ocean or the lesser seas generally begin with the rise of Islam. In choosing to speak on an earlier period my intention is not only to underline the continuity of maritime contacts, but also to go behind the artefacts, as it were. The significance of trade lies not only in the items exchanged but also in the nature of the exchange and the mutation of the cultures communicating through the trade. Trading diasporas, where traders as a distinct quasi-cultural group provide channels for the movement of goods between disparate societies, is one aspect of trans-cultural trade,[1] but interventions in the evolution of societies are equally significant. A diversity of items changed hands; some as objects of simple exchange or of purchase, others perhaps as fetishised commodities. The same cargo may play multiple roles. My endeavour in trying to shift the focus in these directions is necessarily hedged in by the limitations of the current evidence which may involve asking more questions than providing answers.

Roman maritime trade was the first extensive contact between Europe and Asia. The geographical pattern of the contact—the foci of maritime trade, the locations of harbours, the routes using monsoon winds and ocean currents—recurred in later centuries with similar overlaps of traders, commercial interests and cargoes. But those who provided its investment changed over time as also did the economic relations between traders and host countries. Trade with Asia remained, as an activity, somewhat distant to the Romans themselves, except that with the exotica which the trade brought to them they fantasised about the east, a fantasy which is encapsulated in the phrase, *ex oriente lux*. The actual merchants were mainly Greek or Jewish from Egypt and the eastern Mediterranean as well as Palmyrene and Levantine from the Hellenised world. The financial outlay appears to have been largely from this area although it has been argued that wealthy Romans invested in this trade.[2] But increasingly these traders had the backing of local Roman administration and among others, catered to the expensive tastes of Roman patricians. Although the eventual market was Rome, the actual functioning of the maritime trade focussed on Egypt and to a lesser extent on the eastern Mediterranean. From the South Asian perspective one could as well use the nomenclature familiar from those times and refer to it as the Yavana maritime trade.[3]

The commonly used phrase, 'Roman maritime trade with India', refers to the categories of trade and exchange through maritime channels between the eastern Mediterranean as a part of the Roman empire and various regions of the Indian sub-continent. The term 'Roman' is not intended to suggest that Rome itself conducted the trade but refers rather to the fact that the administration of the trade and the profits thereof in the eastern Mediterranean were within the control and jurisdiction of the Roman imperial system. The volume of trade and its impact on Indian centres varied; but where it was substantial there the Roman maritime trade can be viewed as a significant factor of economic and social concern. It speaks for the profits of the trade that in spite of difficulties it was pursued for so long. The Indian markets supplied exotic and aromatic plants and spices—nard, bdellium, costus, aloes, and pepper; semi-precious stones—chalcedonies, beryls, and pearls; a variety of textiles—silk, fine linens and cotton; timbers such as teak and ebony and fragrant sandalwood; all from different parts of the subcontinent, and even tortoise shell and perhaps cinnamon from Sri Lanka and south-east Asia. The traders from Egypt brought to South Asia a range of goods but most frequently lead, tin, coral, glass, wine and above all in the largest number, Roman coins in gold and silver, used in varying ways in different parts of the subcontinent. Judging by the presence of coins in South Asia, the trade commenced on the cusp of the Christian era, with the earliest major collections of coins being those of imperial Rome, reaching its peak in the first century AD. Recent finds of coins of the Roman Republic in south India, antedating the imperial issues, may point to a possibly earlier start to contacts, and this has also been argued from archaeological and palaeographical data.[4] It has however also been argued that the coins of the Republic could have been circulating together with early Imperial coins and do not therefore indicate an earlier start to the trade. The Ptolemies had some idea about the potentials of such a trade even if they did not fully explore it.

Roman maritime trade in the Indian Ocean makes a neat arc from Alexandria to Malacca and if I may borrow a phrase, it was held together by the 'urban gravitation'[5] of Coptos on the Nile, Barygaza in western India, Sopara in the western Deccan, Muziris on the Malabar coast and Kaveripattinam in the Kaveri delta, and their expansive hinterlands. As it inched its way eastwards it threaded through these distinct segments often underlining diverse socioeconomic patterns. The sea creates its own frontiers and zones of activity and these do not invariably coincide with the boundaries of land-based territories. Just prior to the Roman trade the Hellenistic kingdoms, motivated by politics and commercial interests, began to re-explore earlier links. By the third century BC, Mauryan contact with the Hellenistic kingdoms of the Seleucids, Ptolemies and their neighbours are well-established.[6] The Roman maritime trade extended the geographical area of these contacts and realised the potential of economic activities.

Localised circuits of exchange and trade, linking ports and extending into hinterlands sometimes quite far into the interior, existed prior to the Roman trade. Among these were those from the Mediterranean towards the Red Sea pursued by the Phoenicians; the two coasts of the Red Sea involving local seafarers as well as the Ptolemaic search for elephants, which extended this circuit to east Africa and more hesitantly perhaps to south Asia; the caravan trade of southern Arabia with the eastern Mediterranean; the commerce between Syria and the Arab Persian Gulf with the Seleucids encouraging Indian commercial links;[7] the ports in western India drawing on the prosperous commercial centres in the hinterland of northern India and maintaining contact, probably through a looping trade, with ports along the coast of the Arabian peninsula many of which were dependent on this trade for import of food, especially rice, sugar, sesame oil and *ghi*, as well as cotton cloth; the circuits of the Megalithic people of the Indian peninsula and of Sri Lanka further underscored by Mauryan intervention; possible east coast connections with areas across the Bay of Bengal; and the exchange networks within the islands of South-east Asia extending to southern China.

Trade in consumables and food items could well remain a down-the-line coastal trade. But the trade in luxury items, as well as the availability of a large fleet of ships financed by commerce from Egypt and the eastern Mediterranean, encouraged greater risks. A faster mid-ocean route, regularly using monsoon winds, becomes more attractive for such trade. Ideally it was limited to a brief period of the year when the harbours of the west coast of India are serviceable in September and which enables a return to the Red Sea in October with the start of the north-east monsoon. The return journey had to be undertaken by December or at the latest, January. Setting out too early, even with using the south-west monsoon, was not only hazardous but entailed a longer wait in an Indian harbour before returning.[8] The gradual emergence of the Red Sea as the main artery of Roman maritime trade to the east dislodged the pre-eminence of the Persian Gulf. The Red Sea route avoided the hostile Parthians closer to the Persian Gulf, required negotiation with the more malleable Arab traders and brought the west coast of India into quicker contact. The Red Sea route did however require the taking on board of archers as a protection against piracy.[9] Cargo arriving at the ports of the Red Sea was transported overland to Coptos and from there taken down the Nile to Alexandria. Such transportation was familiar to the Egyptian administration and economy since grain had been regularly transported down the Nile from Upper Egypt to Alexandria under the Ptolemies. The small-scale canal transportation was in Egyptian hands but the large-scale grain business on the Nile was controlled by the Greeks from Alexandria. The Levantines also participated in this trade.[10] The earlier transportation formed an important circuit and was doubtless easily adapted to include the cargoes from the east. Roman trade over-arched some of the existing circuits but this did not result in their termination, in fact to the contrary it could act as an incentive to increasing their activity. A fuller assessment of this trade would require a view beyond the circuits to their hinterlands and these differ widely, but in attempting to analyse the trade these differences have to be considered.

Discussions on the Roman economy have generally projected a predominantly agricultural economy with trade playing a marginal role in what has been referred to as the presumed cellular self-sufficiency of the ancient economy. This view is now changing as it is taking cognisance of the nature of the role of trade.[11] Whereas in its social attitudes Roman patrician society was prejudiced against trade and traders, as an economic activity it was significant not only to the Roman economy but also to the patrician lifestyle.[12] The question has been posed as to whether the Roman empire constituted a world-system in terms of the World Systems Analysis[13] where Roman trade would be an important manifestation. As an area of investigation within this theory, the Roman trade with Asia would be additionally significant if in fact there was an imperial policy towards it as well as imperial investment, as has been suggested.[14] The theory assumes a differentiation between two social systems: one was the small, subsistence economy, largely autonomous and not part of a tribute demanding system; the other was the large state containing a multiplicity of cultures and a division of labour related to the most efficient form of production. Of the latter kind there are two categories: the world-empire and the world-economy. The world-empire is linked by a uniform political system which dominates the various interrelated societies within its boundaries and with enough agricultural surplus to maintain artisans and the administrative stratum. The world-economy is fundamentally different with no political unity and with the redistribution of the surplus via the market. It is divided into core states and peripheral states where the former extracts the surplus from the latter in the form of resources. The frontier between the two is the semi-periphery which can also act as a link. The operation of the system revolved around two dichotomies based on unequal exchange: control over production and the appropriation by the centre of the produce of the periphery.[15] The theory concedes that some pre-capitalist world economies may be postulated, such as in China, Persia and Rome, but these changed into world empires.

Relating primarily to capitalism and excluding the pre-capitalist world, the theory appears nonetheless to have caught the fancy of archaeologists and has been used to investigate centre-periphery relations in various sectors of the Roman empire and in other areas of the ancient world.[16] Whereas the Roman empire may or may not confirm to the world-empire model, the world-economy model seems inapplicable to Roman trade with Asia. Trade alone does not necessarily define centre and periphery nor result in a hegemony of the centre over the periphery even if the trade in pre-capitalist societies was more extensive than is envisaged in the theory. However trade can act in some places as a catalyst whereas in others it is subordinated to local economic patterns. Some of the questions which the World Systems Analysis and its critique have raised, such as the nature of centre-periphery relations, could be pertinent to the changes which occurred in the areas involved in the trade. Perhaps the nature of a centre-periphery relationship can be sought in the smaller circuits where new forms of economic and political power emerged in association with the changes brought about by the trade, but these would not necessarily conform to the model. Thus in the context of the Roman trade the dominance of the Cambay region in western India suggests a pattern almost of a centre-centre trade. As a contrast the Malabar coast remains ambiguous and does not conform to an easily recognisable pattern.

What is of greater significance is an assessment of conditions in areas to which the trade reaches out, the differences from region to region and the perception, both cultural and economic, of the foreign traders among those with whom they trade. Mechanisms of exchange were neither uniform nor universal. They included barter, gift-exchange, formalised trade and monetised commodity exchange involving markets. Some of these categories co-existed in the same region but there was usually a priority among them which differed among different cultures. Each had its own complexities, even barter, which is generally dismissed as simple.[17] Barter could occur in the absence of money or in a condition of paucity of coins or even as a form of social distancing from commercial activities. The social back-up of barter was frequently the larger group of the family or the clan. A backing for the exchange of commodities came from more impersonal organisations such as guilds or corporations of traders. Gift-exchange underwrites social relations but also requires strategy and calculation.[18] Where a trade item is converted into a gift, even money can be absorbed as a valuable rather than a currency. Cargo can also consist of fetishised objects. It is thus as well to remind ourselves that, 'A commodity appears at first sight an extremely obvious, trivial thing. But its analysis brings out that it is a very strange thing, abounding in metaphysical subtleties and theological niceties.'[19] To assess the value of an item therefore involves looking at many dimensions of a society.

This in turn relates to the items exchanged and the mechanism of obtaining these. Raw materials are extracted from some areas, while in others trade demands sophisticated production. Exchange involved a series of transactions, some between the foreign trader and the local middleman or the merchant and some between the latter and the supplier of cargoes. Such transactions would register a regional divergence. Hinterlands are governed by varying characteristics and changed over space and time. Existing economies influenced the nature of the trade, and changes in the pattern of trade are pointers to social change. Activities under the rubric of trade are of many kinds and these are linked to itinerant pastoralism, travelling pedlars, clan chiefs, middlemen, traders. These may exist separately or be knitted together in an overarching trade. Thus whereas peddling is an occupation, trade requires an investment.[20]

Traders and ships crews are carriers of a particular culture. Their initial incursions have to be backed by a political interest if a literate high culture is to be introduced. From the western perspective the trade acted as a link between exchange nodes, ports of call and perhaps the mobile settlements of the traders from the west. From the perspective of those on whom the Roman traders called, the view is different. Within the boundaries of the Roman maritime trade in Asia there is the striking difference between the rather limited Mediterranean cultural imprint on India, and on the other hand, what has been called the 'indigenisation' of Indian culture in Southeast Asia. Yet both were not unrelated to the initial demands of the Roman trade.

The interpretation of Roman maritime trade with South Asia has moved from listing items and claiming cultural influences to assessing social and economic patterns.[21] At first studies remained close to the texts, usefully identifying ports and items. The focus shifted with the introduction of archaeological and numismatic data. The argument was frequently posed in terms of Roman influence on India. Viewed from the Indian perspective, the widespread distribution of Roman gold and silver coins in peninsular India would superficially suggest that the trade had overwhelmed Indian networks of exchange. However the complaint of Pliny that the oriental trade was draining the finances of Rome[22] was read as a statement of the economically superior position of India. But the impact of the trade and the imprint of wealth varied in different parts of India largely because of the dissimilar conditions in the subcontinent, which makes generalisations about India as a whole in relation to this trade, questionable. The evidence of coins alone suggests a pattern which points to divergences in different areas. Backed by other evidence the variation stands out even more strongly. Given this, neither barter nor market exchange appears to have been universal.

Western India, including the ports of Barbaricon and Barygaza (Bhṛgukaccha, Bhārukaccha/Bharuch) was known not only to the maritime traders of west Asia but also as an extension of the overland trade from west Asia to India. Barygaza is mentioned more frequently than any other emporium and inevitably had an important role in the Roman trade. Barbaricon was the port to the capital further up the river. The silting up of Barbaricon, known to happen in the Indus delta, may have ended its existence as a port and led to a convergence on Barygaza coinciding with the inclusion of central India as an area of production and internal trade. At the other end of this circuit there is little evidence of Indian ships docking in the northern ports of the Red Sea and this may have been partly because Indian ships were not permitted beyond Ocelis.[23] The Sabaeans in southwest Arabia are said to have acted as middle-men between India and the Mediterranean world, prior to the development of the Roman trade.[24] Perhaps the coral reefs made it dangerous and only the local seamen could handle these conditions.[25] The *Periplus*, a traders' manual probably dating to the mid-first century AD, states that Aden declined as a port after Ptolemaic times and this doubtless coincided with the growth of the Red Sea ports such as Berenice, Myos Hormus and Leucos Limen (Quseir-al-Qadim).[26] Strabo refers to a fleet of a hundred and twenty ships sailing from Myos Hormus to India.[27] This was a radically different situation from the coastal voyages of the earlier trade. It suggests considerable control over shipping in the Red Sea and raises the question of who administered the control—local Arab interests or the Roman administration. The appointment of an official, the *epistrategos*, in charge of the Red Sea and the eastern desert of Egypt which was a Roman continuation of a Ptolemaic practice, would suggest that the local Arabs were edged out of the major trade. The inability or the prevention of Indian ships moving freely in the Red Sea might have been one of the reasons for the initiative of the Indian trade going into Egyptian hands. Indians as individual merchants are however listed as among those who trade in Egypt and are known at Alexandria.[28] Ostracon inscriptions in Prākṛit at Quseir have been read as referring to merchants[29] and graffiti in Tamil Brāhmī on potsherds from the same area could be Tamil names.[30] The connections appear to have been with south India.[31] A much-discussed Greek inscription found closer to the Nile refers to an Indian, Sophon (probably Subhānu) who addresses a prayer to the god Pan and was evidently a Hellenised Indian.[32]

Western India shows a familiarity with more than one pattern of exchange. The Ābhīras who were initially itinerant pastoralists but later took to other occupations give their name to the coastal area which was now associated with a sophisticated commerce. Barygaza was also a manufacturing centre and therefore imported some raw materials as well as commodities such as silverware, wine and perfume not to mention slave girls and musicians.[33] The hinterland of Barygaza from Saurashtra to central India included more distant areas from where silk and Kashmir nard was brought to be exported to the west. The rich trading centres of this hinterland such as Mathura and Ujjain, were familiar with monetary media and had used local high value coins contemporary with the arrival of the traders from the eastern Mediterranean. The paucity of Roman gold coins in northern India may not have been because the Kuṣāṇas melted the metal to mint their own coins, but because there was little need for yet another monetary medium in the area, although there may be more grounds for suggesting that the Kṣatrapa silver currency of western India re-used Roman originals.[34] Many parts of the Indian subcontinent, including western India, had known the circulation of punch-marked coins. Although this coinage is distinct from that associated with the Roman trade, nevertheless some familiarity with monetary exchange has to be assumed for the areas where the punch-marked coins circulated. In the first century AD there is an import of Roman *denarii* into western India which, it is said, can be exchanged with much profit for the local currency,[35] but this declines. The Roman trade at Barygaza appears to have been handled by local merchants. Given the variance in forms of trade and the circulation of coins in the area, it is unlikely that the nature of this exchange was limited to barter rather than commerce as has been suggested by way of an explanation for the lack of Roman coins. The nature of the commercial exchange in itself may have precluded the presence of Roman coins although indigenous coins are available.

Further down along the west coast were the port of Suppāra, (Suppāraka/Sopara) and the city of Kalliena (Kalyāna). The importance of the former dates to the Mauryan period. In a Buddhist *Jātaka* story it is linked to Bhārukaccha and associated with mariners and seamanship.[36] The hinterland of the two ports fanned out to central India and the Deccan, the network of which can be mapped by epigraphic references at Buddhist sites to donors from various places.[37] The resources of this hinterland had been earlier tapped by the local Chalcolithic and Megalithic people. The Mauryas in turn had sought access to timber, a large range of semi-precious stones such as carnelian, quartz and agate used for making beads and other forest produce. Processes of exchange were therefore a familiar activity moving towards more complex forms of exchange, but there was a continuity in the items sought by the western trade. The tapping of resources was juxtaposed with centres of production and with towns controlling a sophisticated trade along the routes to the ports. Paithan and Ter in the western Deccan are said to send textiles along almost impassable routes to Barygaza. Bhokardan in the same area was a bead-making centre.[38] The nexus between elite politics and mercantile communities is evident from royalty investing sums of money in craftsmen's guilds by way of a donation, with the interest on the investment going to the Buddhist monasteries.[39] Cash donations involving large sums of money are again indicative of the widespread use of monetary exchange in western India and the western Deccan. The distribution of Sātavāhana coinage in the Deccan confirms the same. Although some rulers built rest-houses along the longer routes, nevertheless the monasteries must have acted as staging points as they do elsewhere. At those where the halt was necessary prior to facing the difficult terrain of the *ghats* such as at Nasik, Junnar, Karle, Bedsa and Kolhapur, or at terminal points such as Barygaza or Sopara, the endowments in the vicinity were impressive.[40] Even the monastic complex at Kanheri near Sopara was associated with what has been called a 'sub-urban complex'.[41] Frequent and sizeable donations by traders and artisans point to a growth in the commercial economy as compared to the earlier period and in the general expansion of subcontinental and trans-Asian trade, the maritime trade with Egypt played no small role in these parts. A significant body of donors were women—wives of traders, artisans and small-scale landowners as well as nuns.

Inscriptions refer to a large range of professions involved in the production of a variety of commodities. Among these, goldsmiths and workers in semi-precious stones are prominent and this is backed by archaeological evidence of bead working in the western Deccan.[42] Donors at Buddhist sacred sites, identify themselves with towns in the area. Guilds of ivory-carvers, weavers, potters, oil-pressers, bamboo workers and corn dealers are also mentioned.[43] Categories of persons involved in trade include the *seṭṭhi* or financier, the *vanij* or merchant, the *sārthavāha* or transporter and the *negama* who is associated with the market. Other sources describe ships arriving in port with merchants bidding for cargo, of merchants at border towns or in dialogue with producers.[44]

Not surprisingly a large range of items associated with the eastern Mediterranean surfaces at sites in the western Deccan.[45] Some were imported and others were local imitations. Smaller objects, such as bronze figures and Roman lamps, had their local imitations. Clay bullae suggest the same. Roman amphorae, generally containing wine or oil, were bulk items and may well have doubled as ballast. Judging by the distribution of the sherds there appears to have been a brisk market for wine. It has been argued that luxury trade required bulk goods as an economic balance since bulk goods with a saleable value maximise cargo space and freight revenue.[46] The large number of items from the Mediterranean which turn up in western India may also have come through the overland trade although coastal sites appear to have been quite active. More specific to the western Deccan are items such as clay seals of Roman design, double-moulded terracotta figurines, bronze statuettes—appropriately of Poseidon, Eros and Atlas, household objects such as metal cups, mirrors, a wine jug, a candlestick stand and a variety of Roman glass.[47] Were these the belongings of visiting Yavana merchants, or of Indian merchants who had brought them back as souvenirs from their travels west? These were not invariably bulk items but markers of gracious living. Given the frequency of local imitations, Roman objects were prized and may have even been purchased for money. Thus coral brought from the west was valued for the same reason as in the Mediterranean lands: it was a talisman against illness and evil. Imported coral was doubtless thought to be more effective than that available close by.

Roman trade with Barygaza and the western Deccan was therefore conditioned by a locally well-established economic exchange. The commercial advantages outweighed the navigational difficulties of a bad anchorage at Barygaza and the former assumed a familiarity both with local commerce as well as its extensive hinterland. In political terms this implied reasonably powerful states with some concern for the furtherance of the trade. A recognition of the economic importance of the Roman trade would explain why ships arriving at Kalyāna were escorted under guard to Barygaza, given the hostilities between the Śakas and the Sātavāhanas.[48] Clearly the profits from the Roman trade were highly attractive, hence the competition between local powers to capture the trade. This was not a profitable barter or a localised exchange but included a transit trade as well since the destinations of the items were often quite distant, as is frequently so with luxury goods.

Further south the picture changes. In most parts of south India barring the major settlements registering the presence of the Yavanas, there are fewer Roman artefacts but a strikingly larger number of coins, particularly in hoards. This is suggestive of a different dialogue underlying trade.

Roman trade with the Malabar coast, focuses on a new item much in demand namely, black pepper. So profitable was this trade to the suppliers of pepper that this item could indeed be called 'black gold', the pepper being exchanged for gold.[49] The volume of black pepper exported must have been enormous because it was the cheapest of the peppers according to Pliny[50] and was paid for in coin. Possibly the pepper was also used as ballast on the journey back.[51] Pliny mentions a price for the pepper, early Tamil sources refer only to exchanging it for gold. Pliny adds that the pepper grew extensively in the area to the east, Cottonara, and was collected and sent in canoes made of hollowed out tree-trunks, to the emporium at Muziris.[52] That it was extremely valuable is also clear from Pliny who states that it was easy to adulterate it with locally available mustard seeds at Alexandria.[53] The demand for other items included semi-precious stones and the popularity of beryl is indicated by Roman coins which tend to cluster around the beryl mines near Coimbatore, a location which was also on the overland route to the east coast. Those who grew the pepper were likely not to have been the same as those who mined the beryl.

The presence of semi-precious stones and their distribution again goes back to Chalcolithic and Megalithic sites in the peninsula prior to the Roman trade. Megalithic exchange networks also carried a range of metal artefacts which have been found in burials. These were mainly weapons, agricultural implements such as hoes, and horse-bits, generally of iron. Also included as grave furnishings were carnelian and gold beads and jewellery. The exchange could have been an itinerant pedlar's exchange but more likely it was an exchange among the elite of goods which conferred status. The proximity of the Kolar gold-fields and auriferous veins in Karnataka, where numerous Aśokan inscriptions were located, also provides evidence of the Megalithic people and the Mauryan administration working these sites.[54] Spectacular remains of gold objects in Megalithic burials are few and possibly the gold was sent back to the Mauryan capital. The working of gold mines and veins would have added to the importance of gold in the local system of exchange and perhaps encouraged its hoarding when available.

The discovery of a sizeable amount of high value silver and gold Roman coins, occurring as stray finds and in hoards, in the peninsula, raises many questions relating to the Yavanas and to the local persons involved in the exchange. It has been argued that the silver *denarii* found in larger numbers were widely used in the transactions of the earlier period of the trade and the introduction of gold coins came later and that the silver coins were tied to the trade in beryl and semi-precious stones.[55] Interestingly Tamil sources associate pepper with gold. However the basic question remains that of explaining why the coins were found mainly in hoards. The explanation may cover more than a single function for the coins and the need to hoard them may have been due to a coinciding of various factors.

Were the coins hoarded against brigandage or alternatively paid as protection money to ensure the safe passage of goods from one coast to the other? Could it be that the hoards were intended as investments in further trade on the part of visiting traders? Were the coins in southern India and the western Deccan indicators that larger quantities of merchandise were bought for the Roman markets?[56] Roman coin hoards in India tend to be of specially selected coins with a high degree of metal purity.[57] Minted in the context of market exchange, they could become a measure for the commoditisation of other items. It has been suggested that Roman coins were used as bullion. This is more likely to apply to silver coins for if the high point of gold mining in Karnataka was during the period from 200 BC to AD 200,[58] there may not have been a need to use gold coins as bullion.

Gold and silver coins as items of consumption outside the context of market exchange could be linked to status hierarchies in which those who had access to these coins were in positions of dominance. Although some items are both necessities and luxuries, their particular role can be differentiated according to the circumstance in which they occur. Luxuries have been described as goods whose principal use is rhetorical and social, they are incarnated signs and respond to political necessity.[59] Commodities subsume value and labour value and value arises from the social context of the object. The intention of exchange can be the enhancement of status or of economic profit and this would be decided by the category of exchange—barter, gift-exchange or commodity trade.

Could the hoards be evidence of a system of gift exchange among indigenous chiefs and ruling families which might have continued from the chiefships of the earlier period? Gift-exchange does encourage the accumulation of wealth up to a point. If so then coins would not be used as high value currency but would be regarded as symbols of status. The political hegemony of the Cēras, Cōḷas and Pāṇḍyas in south India, in competition with the chieftains—the Velir, is evident by the turn of the Christian era from Tamil sources. Even Pliny makes a distinction between the king of

Muziris, Caelobothra (the Latin for Cēraputra? echoing an earlier clan identity), and the tribe/*gentis* Neacyndi controlling the port at Porakud, a port also used by the Pāṇḍya king whose capital was further inland.[60] Chiefships and kingships co-existed. Pliny also states that local conditions were changing as reflected in the changing names of tribes, ports and towns. Power was garnered in the traditional manner through marriage alliances and conquests, hence the poems of love and war in the Śangam anthologies.[61] Wealth had earlier been collected but periodically distributed in the holding of great feasts which took on the character of a potlatch. The politics of monarchies was relatively recent in these kingdoms. As they moved towards consolidating kingdoms, the expenses of maintaining both kingship and the state increased. The availability of wealth became imperative. Prestige goods in order to be effective have to be circulated and the hoarding of these would have another meaning. If the coins did not circulate as wealth, their possession may have been of symbolic importance. Control over prestige goods is an enabling factor providing social and economic power useful to negotiating alliances. It is assumed that it was the families of the chiefs and the emergent royal families who, constituting the elite, controlled the goods. They not only had the will and the ability to accumulate wealth but could do so cutting across the identity of the clan. The ready availability of high value coins as prestige goods may have encouraged this process. The intrinsic value of the early imperial Roman coin was obviously recognised. Does the presence of Roman coin hoards suggest that in addition to an established commercial system in the coastal areas of south India, there was also in the hinterland, the prevalence of forms of barter? The coin therefore did not have the single function for which it was minted but could be used variously in accordance with the activities of the recipient and the nature of exchange.

What then was the impact of the Roman trade on such a society? Were the coin hoards seen as status symbols representing an accumulation that was not put to an economically productive use? Or did they contribute to the accumulating activities of the elite groups through whom the local resources were gathered and exchanged and which accelerated and intensified hierarchies? Such groups may eventually have indulged in some entrepreneurship themselves. The exports local to the region were mainly natural resources and not crafted products. The *Periplus* refers to villages and marts along the Malabar coast rather than urban commercial centres with the exception of Muziris and Nelkynda.[62] It records the import of wheat into Muziris presumably to feed the Yavana merchants negotiating with local middlemen or the crews of the ships waiting for the north-east monsoon in order to sail back to the Red Sea. Muziris as an emporium draws for export, cargoes from the east coast, including Chinese silk, Gangetic nard and tortoise shell from south-east Asia. Its imports are a great amount of money and other items not too different from elsewhere. But its hinterland is different from that of Barygaza. The activities at Muziris may not initially have been all that integrated with the hinterland and this may have changed gradually. The change is reflected in Tamil sources. The earlier Tamil source, the *Śaṅgam* literature has a larger space for chiefdoms and the Yavanas are alien, whereas the somewhat later Tamil epics, the *Śilappadikāram* and the *Maṇimēkalai*, assume monarchy to be the more familiar system with cities as centres of commerce in some of which the Yavanas have settled. Transactions within the trade would have moved from the one to the other.

Roman trading contacts on the eastern coast of south India were with a society familiar with commercial exchange although perhaps not as sophisticated as the markets of Barygaza and the western Deccan. Punch-marked coins circulated in Tamilnadu[63] and may have come as a result of increased trade in the post-Mauryan period. Tamil Brāhmī votive inscriptions found in great profusion, suggest the presence of professionals and craftsmen but even in their Buddhist and Jaina identity they do not carry the power and the patronage of the community associated with the monastic centres of the western Deccan. The wharf at Kāveripaṭṭinam and the presence of Yavanas at the port in later times points to the continuing importance of the area. Roman traders located their bases at Arikamedu and Kāveripaṭṭinam, both of which, prior to this, may have been collection points for goods.[64] The location of Arikamedu has been associated with one of the strongholds of the Velir chieftains.[65] As bases, these would have been linked to resources both from Sri Lanka to the south and from the east coast of India along the major river deltas to the Ganga and possibly south-east Asia.[66] Earlier excavations at Arikamedu yielded Roman artefacts and what was interpreted as evidence for the manufacture of textiles.[67] A more recent excavation suggests that the settlement in the previous period had links with local exchange networks.[68] What is also of interest is that the amphorae sherds indicate that they were containers of wine, oil and garum, the latter two suggesting the presence of foreign consumers.[69] The presence of foreign merchants who brought their goods to Kāveripaṭṭinam and who had left their homes and settled there and who spoke a variety of languages is mentioned in the *Śilappadikāram*[70] although the text is later than the first century AD. Recent excavations as Alagankulam suggest a possible trading-station in the Vaigai delta servicing the Pāṇḍyan territory.[71] It has been plausibly argued that Roman ships did not initially round the Cape because of navigational problems and thus the overland route from near Coimbatore—the Palghat gap—to the east coast became the regular route. Furthermore Indian seamen, using indigenous boats, fetched and carried cargo between the two coasts.[72] Payment for this trade may have required a large monetary outlay which could have been delivered to merchants and middlemen along the safer land route. Hence the location of major coin hoards along this route.

Settlements of Yavana traders were not colonies since that would imply that there was an appropriation of resources, land and labour and some degree of permanency which was not the case. The nature of the settlements were by no means identical. Some might have been trading stations with a quick change of visiting traders using local agents as mediators in the trade. The emporium at Muziris may have been one of these. The manufacturing of items locally which were specific to this trade, such as textiles, may have encouraged merchants to live more permanently in the settlements as at Arikamedu and Kāveripaṭṭinam. It is possible that Paithan and Ter in the western Deccan which are also associated with the production of textiles for this trade may have played a similar role given the Yavana settlement at Dhenukākaṭa. This would point to a more-than-casual lateral intervention in the production of items.

In the eastern Deccan, at one site Roman pottery and other artefacts have been found together with Megalithic pottery pointing to an interaction between the two.[73] The area had been under Mauryan administration, had coastal links with ports along the deltas as far north as the Ganga and was also linked to the routes going inland to central India and to the western Deccan. Khāravela in Kalinga, generally dated to about the first century BC, boasts of conquering a confederacy of the Tamils which may be just a boast but could reflect an east coast network.[74] He also refers to defeating the Sātavāhana king at the Krishna river and to receiving pearls from the Pāṇḍyan king. Important Buddhist centres with votive inscriptions, such as at Bhaṭṭtiprolu and Amarāvatī, indicate organised mercantile activities involving market centres and towns as well as agrarian prosperity and some date to the period just prior to the Roman trade.[75] Substantial Roman coin finds occur in Andhra Pradesh, particularly in and around the Krishna valley.[76] The *Periplus* has a sparse reference to ports in this area—the region of Masalia—but gradually, judging by coin finds and the more detailed references in Ptolemy to Maisolia (Masulipattam),[77] Roman trading interests appear to have increased. Ptolemy provides details of urban activity and the sources agree that it was a production centre for cotton fabric. The wharf at Dharanikota (ancient Dhānyakakaṭa), the port of the settlement at Amarāvati, continues to be used until it is silted up in the third century AD[78] by which time Roman coins become scarce.

Coin hoards from the region around the Krishna valley contain high value coins. As is also the case in some south Indian hoards, a few are defaced either by a bar or slashed and others carry small punch marks.[79] There appears to be a greater frequency in slashing gold coins than defacing silver coins and the latter seem to be restricted to the Krishna valley. The defacing of these coins is unlikely to have been because of Hīnayāna Buddhist iconoclasm as has been suggested, since Buddhism by now had its own icons and had not objected to royal portraits elsewhere in India. It was more likely to do with differentiating between those coins minted prior to Nero's debasement of coins or with an attempt to prevent these coins from being sent back to Egypt.[80] The defacement ensured that their currency was restricted to the Indian circuits of the trade and particularly along the east coast. This might further relate to Yavana interest in resources from south-east Asia and the need for readily available specie in areas which had links with these resources. (Ptolemy mentions in his discussion of Maisolia that the point of departure for ships going to the Khryse or south-east Asia was on this coast). Yet it is curious that only a small percentage of the coins are defaced. High value coins in the Krishna valley are unlikely to have been used only as symbols of status, as might have been the case in some parts of south India, since there was a familiarity with monetary exchange based on a system of indigenous coins. The use of punch marks may even suggest an attempted continuity from earlier practice.

The lure of trade further east was possibly because of the fabled lands of gold, the *suvarṇa* prefixes in the Sanskrit place names and the possibility of an alternate route to Chinese silk and other items not easily available in India. The *Periplus* gives few details of ports and harbours along the northern half of the east coast. A major commercial port called Ganga, on the delta, was evidently the point at which the trade along the Ganga valley came to settle. Its identity remains uncertain although it has been linked to Tāmralipti (Tamluk)[81] the most active port in the delta going back to the Mauryan period with an extensive hinterland of the Ganga plain. Eastwards the picture is vague for the *Periplus* refers only to Thina as the silk producing land. However the geographer Ptolemy, writing at a later date in the second century AD (and with possible interpolations), provides more details of the ports and produce from the Ganga delta to the Gulf of Siam, a circuit which gradually comes into greater use. This circuit continues to be referred to as 'India', suggesting the strong imprint of Indian trade at these ports.

There has been much discussion on the mutation in some parts of south-east Asia initiated by incidental and later more organised exchange with Indian traders.[82] The process remains elusive but hypotheses can be suggested. In clan-based societies reciprocal relations are achieved through maintaining the status quo or allowing only a limited deviation. Exchange activities with those outside the clan would introduce social imbalances and alter the existing economic forms. Such changes would encourage the accentuation of political control by those already in some positions of authority. A link between alien traders and emergent chiefs would have enhanced the power of the latter and might possibly have impeded the growth of indigenous traders. Initially at least the items traded would tend to be redistributed except where they were regarded as prestige goods. With the emergence of states, however, relations between Indian traders and local royalty in the kingdoms drew on a variety of cultural elements as well. Among the cultural imports into south-east Asia were the coming of Buddhism and Brahmanism, where both were to provide ideologies of political control to the local elite. Buddhism tends to be less acceptable to clan-based societies for whom Brahmanical sacrificial rituals were easier entry points into an imported ideology and could be more comfortably adjusted to local mores and beliefs. When exchange turned into trade, however, Buddhism perhaps became more attractive because of its social ethic which included a partiality for the accumulation of wealth and investment in commerce. But there was an increasing tendency for the two to fade into each other.

Unlike the Indian Ocean trade of later times when Islam and Christianity provided a religious backing to the trading networks, the Roman trade did not carry a religion. Those that came from the Mediterranean were largely worshippers of Greco-Roman and Egyptian deities, with possibly some early Christians. There is an absence of recognisable representations of such deities in India.[83] Nor is there a presence of Christianity at this time although the picture changes by the middle of the millennium.[84] Christian texts written in the eastern Mediterranean begin to mention Christian missions from the second century AD and the establishment of the Church in south India and Sri Lanka by about the sixth century AD.[85] The council of Nicea in AD 325 lists an Indian connection and there is later evidence of a Nestorian mission. Still later, Syrian Christians are said to have settled in Kerala.[86] If at all a wide-ranging religious ideology is to be associated with this trade, then it seems to have been Buddhism which spread along the trade routes and where possible provided an ideological infrastructure which helped to integrate a diversity of mercantile and political interests with religious concerns. These were possibly germane to the almost contradictory tradition of the Christian hermits in Syria and Egypt[87] and the royal cults of Cambodia and Indonesia.

Indian perceptions of those that came from the west, the Yavanas, varied.[88] The north Indian experience of the Yavanas was initially in the context of aggression and military hostility: the campaigns of Alexander and later of the Indo-Greeks. Consequently in some Brahmanical texts, the Yavanas are reviled and regarded as oppressors.[89] When the Indo-Greeks ruled in northern India there was a problem about giving them a rank in the hierarchy of caste and they were slotted as *vrātya-kṣatriyas* or literally, the degenerate *kṣatriyas*. Yavanas arriving as peaceful traders do not find an entry in Brahmanical texts. This was in part because the good *brāhmaṇa* was told to avoid the cities, the traders and their means of livelihood such as usury, and to refrain from crossing the seas. Needless to say few *brāhmaṇas* paid attention to these injunctions. *Brāhmaṇa* hostility to the Yavanas also derived from the fact that the latter, both as royalty and as traders, were substantial patrons of the various Buddhist sects who by now were regarded as heretics by the *brāhmaṇas*. This did not however preclude more than just a passing interest in some categories of technical knowledge. Familiarity with Hellenistic ideas on medicine and horoscopy is evident from various texts. The *Yavanajātaka*, a text on horoscopy is believed to be based on a Greek text from Alexandria and dates to the early Christian era and was probably translated or written in western India.[90] It would seem that a few Greek-speaking persons may have been settled in western India and had a high status since they use the title of *rājā*. The text has a Brahmanical idiom and perspective and is contemptuous of other religious sects which it describes as *pāṣaṇḍas* or heretics.[91] The use of such a text may not however have been limited to the *brāhmaṇa* elite.

The Buddhist view of the Yavanas was different. There was a curiosity about Yavana society and there is a tradition of Buddhist missions having been sent to Yavana lands to proselytise. Buddhist texts respect traders and merchants, and Buddhism derived a considerable patronage from the support of mercantile groups in Indian society. Consequently traders and commercial centres were not treated as marginal. Wealthy Buddhist Yavanas are mentioned in the votive inscriptions at Buddhist sacred sites in the Deccan.[92] Some have Prākritised Indian names but were not Indians else they would not have claimed to be Yavanas.[93] In one case the donor describes himself as a northerner but in most instances the term Yavana alone is used. As worshippers of Isis or Poseidon, their 'pagan' beliefs would not have stood in the way of an acceptance of Buddhism. If anything, it would have admitted them to the dominant religious idiom of the traders of western India. If an early reading of these inscriptions is correct that some among the Yavanas came from Gata, then it may be suggested that this should not be identified with Trigarta or Jallandhar in northern India, but could be the Prākṛit form of Coptos (Coptos>Gapta> Gata). However recent readings have related the suffix *gata* to *saṇgata* as in a corporation[94] or else interpret *gata* as part of the Yavana name and not a place.[95] But it is unlikely that the suffix *gata* was a recognised Yavana name-ending. There are references in Greek and Latin sources to persons from Egypt being in India and Coptos was the emporium which handled the trade from India.[96] That a merchant from Coptos could declare himself a Buddhist and be involved in the maritime trade with the western Deccan, also provides a logical context. The inscriptions mention that some of these Yavanas were associated with Dhenukākaṭa which has been variously identified but was probably close to Karle in the western Deccan.[97] That Dhenukākaṭa was a commercial centre is suggested by its description as a *vaniya-gāma*,[98] It is not surprising that the maximum integration between Yavanas and Indians was in an area where commerce was developed. One expression of this integration appears to have been a bi-lingualism in Hellenistic Greek and Prākṛit although there must have been a bi-lingualism in Greek and Tamil as well.

Tamil Śangam literature provides yet another facet of Indian views of the Yavanas. There are descriptions of the beautiful ships of the Yavanas, laden with gold which they exchange for pepper.[99] Mention is also made of the cool fragrant wine brought by them in elegant jars.[100] Sometimes the tone is hostile as when a Cēra chief is said to have captured the barbarous Yavanas and divested them of their wine and their wealth.[101] Cēra hostility towards the Yavanas is repeated in the epics of the subsequent period.[102] To the Tamil speakers of the south, Yavana speech was a harsh and barbarous language. In the Tamil epics the relationship seems to have changed as they describe the Yavanas in the port of Kāveripaṭṭinam not as passing visitors but as resident craftsmen or even employed as city guardsmen.[103] They are said to live in a separate section of the city and are distinguished by their wealth. This remains a more distanced view of the Yavanas than in the western Deccan. In spite of the presence of Buddhists in the area there are no Yavana Buddhists. Thus the difference in the nature of the trade and exchange is also reflected in these facets of the Yavana relationship with the people of the subcontinent.

The Roman trade may not have bestowed a common belief system on the lands which it touched, but Roman coins became legal tender in large parts of the Indian Ocean. The role of the trade in the Roman economy is significant and has been commented upon both by contemporaries and by modern historians. The starting point of what has become a debate are the statements by both Pliny and Tiberius that the wealth of Rome was being drained by the purchase of articles of feminine vanity and of luxury from the east.[104] Tiberius, in a letter to the Roman senate objected to the conspicuous consumption of Roman patricians in the grandeur of their villas, their numerous slaves, their silver, gold and objects d'art, their fine clothes and the jewels of the women, many of these items coming from distant lands. Pliny at one point mentions a drain of fifty-five million sesterces; and elsewhere he assessed the drain of wealth to India, Arabia and China as one hundred million sesterces.[105] Such statement were taken literally and it was argued that this trade contributed to the economic pressures on the Roman empire which facilitated its decline.

An early attempt at refuting this view[106] pointed out that there was a rigorous control over *ad valorem* customs duties of up to twenty-five per cent on imports from the east into Egypt and the re-exporting of such goods from Alexandria. The actual loss of gold was not high because of the supply from the gold mines of Spain and treasure captured in campaigns. In fact, the price of gold on the Roman market dropped somewhat at the end of the first century AD just after the period of the maximum despatch of gold coins to the Indian trade. Another argument rejecting the fleeing of gold from Rome in the eastern trade maintains that the Romans exported wines, tin, and lead and that the Indians exchanged goods for goods, not having a sufficient monetary outlay.[107] The latter statement is open to question since, as we have seen, a uniform pattern of exchange did not prevail in every part of India. The monetary outlay in northern and western India appears to have been sufficient for the trade. Coin hoards in themselves are not the sole evidence of a financial drain, for the nature of the exchange would have to be examined. The total number of Roman coins in India is small as compared to those found in hoards on the northern frontier of the Roman empire[108] where money was used to buy off the barbarians and therefore played a different role from that of the hoards in the Indian peninsula. A further perspective on this question argues for looking at other features unconnected with maritime trade which contributed to a decline in the Roman economy. These include the over-expansion of global consumption in the Antonine age, the economic pressure on the state arising out of the system of doles, the fiscal pressures on medium and small scale landowners and the evasion of taxes by large property owners as well as the increased expenditure on the army and the bureaucracy and on keeping the barbarians at bay.[109] A more recent debate focuses on doubts regarding an economic decline.[110]

Egypt was the focal point of the eastern maritime trade in the Roman empire.[111] It attracted a larger volume of trade from the east than from the cargoes of the Mediterranean.[112] The initial thrust of the Ptolemies in the eastern direction was extended when Egypt became a province of the Roman empire.[113] Shipping was largely controlled by wealthy Alexandrian merchants who had a monopoly over the Red Sea trade. The Roman administration continued the Ptolemaic office of the *espistrategos* of Thebaid, the prefect of the Red Sea, who had command over the eastern desert and controlled the caravan routes and customs dues levied at Coptos.[114] He also kept a check on the tariffs collected on this route and the tariff rates suggest that small-scale transportation was as frequent as the larger caravans. Heavy fees were charged for the use of these routes which had to be kept well-guarded to ensure a safe passage for the transshipment of cargo.[115] The maintenance of a garrison at Coptos may have been required for this purpose as well.[116] The caravan routes from the Red Sea ports to inland centres in Egypt were run by private companies.[117]

A papyrus document containing a contract between a merchant and a ship's captain refers to shipments of goods from India and dates to the second century AD.[118] Views differ as to where exactly the contract was drawn up, either in Muziris or Alexandria or at a port of the Red Sea where the cargo was off-loaded. The contract relates to cargo from Muziris and its transport from the port to the Nile and its safe arrival in the warehouse of the merchant in Alexandria. The cargo which is the subject of this contract consisted of 700 to 1,700 pounds of Gangetic nard, about 4,700 pounds of ivory and a variety of textiles totalling about 790 pounds—all luxury goods and subject to a twenty-five per cent customs duty on import. Curiously pepper is not included in the list. The contract points to a very large capital investment and this had to cover not only the cost of the cargo but also the maintenance of a crew and its stay in India while waiting for the return monsoon, and protection of the cargo from brigandage en route. Possibly Pliny was troubled by such large investments of capital. Yet if one voyage was so costly, the drain of fifty-five million sesterces does not seem totally out of proportion. What the Muziris contract does underline is that the trade with south India was substantial in the second century AD with Muziris continuing to be the emporium for goods even from the east coast. The enormous financial outlay required in this trade as is evident from the contract, does rather diminish the importance of the quantitative aspect of the Roman coin hoards in peninsular India.

Bullion was sold in the open market at Coptos and Alexandria where the former is particularly associated with silver bullion.[119] That Coptos was extremely important to this trade is evident from the large numbers of Greek *ostraca* recording accounts and receipts.[120] These receipts and the evidence of the Muziris contracts point not only to the outlay on this trade but also to complex banking systems in Egypt. High taxes were levied on the various processes of textile production,[121] presumably to encourage the import of textiles rather than raw material. Perhaps this accounted for the vats at Ter and Arikamedu.

Coptos was the bustling business centre and was sufficiently cosmopolitan for Greek families and others such as Hellenised Egyptians, Levantines, traders from Palmyra to be the main actors in the Indian trade.[122] That women were also representatives of trading houses and were ship-owners and merchants goes back to Ptolemaic times.[123] Coptos was the centre for collecting and handling cargo to be forwarded either eastwards or to Alexandria. The ultimate control lay in the hands of the merchants from Alexandria whose representatives were resident at points along which the cargo moved. Alexandria was the centre financing the trade, organising the sale and purchase of cargoes and arranging the transhipment of large quantities to Rome. It would seem that although the tastes of the Roman patricians were met by this trade, its commercial base remained in the Roman province of Egypt. Egypt therefore can be viewed as the periphery to the centre at Rome, or else as the centre to the periphery in the eastern Mediterranean.

The spectacular profits of the trade for Mediterranean traders encouraged the fabulous in descriptions of Asia. What is perhaps curious is that despite the close contacts resulting from the trade with the Yavanas and the visibility of the transactions, the Indian world has left us no descriptions of places and peoples visited in the course of this trade.

And what of Rome and its citizens whose demands sustained this trade? Rome, it has been said, was a consumer city par excellence, and the eastern luxury trade was crucial to its life-style. This was recognised in more than just the complaints of Tiberius and Pliny. In what has been referred to as the apocalyptic cartoon language of one book of the Bible—*The Revelations of St John*—Rome is projected as the 'scarlet harlot' and its opulence and evil ways are denounced.[124] The denunciation coincided with the peak period of the eastern trade. St John prophesies doom on the death of Rome and adds that, '... merchants the world over have grown rich on her bloated wealth, but when she dies they will mourn, as no one will buy their cargoes of ... jewels, pearls, silks and fine linen, of scented woods, ivories ... cinnamon and spice ...' But trade falsified the dire prophecies of St John. The regular visits of merchant ships to India continued into Late Roman times and even later.[125] Given the author of the prophecy, it was all the more ironic that in the fourth century AD Constantine donated to the eastern churches vast quantities of incense, perfume, nard, balsam and pepper.[126] It is not clear as to what the churches would have done with these donations. They may have used a small amount in church rituals but probably sold the bulk on the market, deriving a substantial revenue from the sale. The cargo listed by St John had a constant market in the Mediterranean, providing a continuity to the trade with South Asia well after Roman times. And in later centuries there were to be, many more cities in Europe emulating the 'scarlet harlot'.

Notes and References

* This is an expanded version of the South Asia Lecture given at the South Asian Studies Association Conference at Armidale in July 1992. Published in *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies*, volume 15, issue 2, pp. 1–28. Copyright © 1992 by Informa UK Limited, an Informa Group company. www.tandfonline.com. Used with permission.

1. P. Curtin, *Cross-cultural Trade in World History*, Cambridge, 1984.
2. M.G. Raschke, 'New Studies in Roman Commerce with the East', *Aufsteig and Niedergang der Romischer Welt*, Berlin, 1978, p. 646.
3. *Yavana* from the Prākṛit *yona*, was initially the term used for Greeks but soon came to be applied to all those who came from west Asia and even further west.
4. P. Turner, *Roman Coins from India*, London, 1989, pp. 6–7, 42–3, 90. V. Begley, 'Arikamedu Reconsidered', *American Journal of Archaeology*, 87 (1983), pp. 261–482. See also, R. Nagaswamy, 'Alagankulam: An Indo-Roman Trading Station', in C. Margabandhu et al. (eds), *Indian Archaeological Heritage*, Delhi, 1991, pp. 247–54.
5. K.N. Chaudhuri, *Trade and Civilisation in the Indian Ocean*, Cambridge, 1985, p. 165.
6. R. Thapar, 'Epigraphic Evidence and some Indo-Hellenistic Contacts During the Mauryan Period', in S.K. Maity and U. Thakur (eds), *Indological Studies, Prof. D.C. Sircar Commemoration Volume*, New Delhi, 1988, pp. 15–19. See chapter 13 in volume II.
7. J.F. Salles, 'The Arab Persian Gulf under the Seleucids', in A. Kuhrt and S. Sherwin-White, *Hellenism in the East*, London, 1987, pp. 75–109. F. Millar, 'The Problem of Hellenistic Syria', *Hellenism in the East*, pp. 110–33. D.T. Potts, *The Arabian Gulf in Antiquity*, vol. II, Oxford, 1990.
8. L. Casson, 'Rome's Trade with the East: The Sea Voyage to Africa and India', *Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association*, 110 (1980), pp. 21–36. Pliny, *Natural History*, 6.26.106.
9. Pliny, *Natural History*, 6.26.101.
10. D.J. Thompson, 'Nile Grain Transport under the Ptolemies', in P. Garnsey, K. Hopkins, C.R. Wittaker (eds), *Trade in the Ancient Economy*, London, 1983, pp. 64–76.
11. K. Hopkins, 'Introduction', in P. Garnsey et al., *Trade in the Ancient Economy*, pp. ix–xxv.
12. R. Duncan–Jones, *Structure and Scale in the Roman Economy*, Cambridge, 1990, pp. 29, 46ff. H.W. Pleket, 'Urban Elites and Business in the Greek Part of the Roman Empire', in P. Garnsey et al., *Trade in the Ancient Economy*, pp. 131–44. J.H. D'Arms, *Commerce and Social Standing in Ancient Rome*, Cambridge, Mass., 1981.

13. G. Wolf, 'World Systems Analysis and the Roman Empire', *Journal of Roman Archaeology*, 3 (1990), pp. 44–56.
14. S. Sidebotham, *Roman Economic Policy in the Erythra Thalassa, 30* BC *to* AD *217*, Leiden, 1986. But see also L. Casson, *Periplus Maris Erythraei* (hereafter *PME*), New Jersey, 1989, pp. 32–3, for the more generally accepted view that the trade was in private hands.
15. E. Wallerstein, 'A World-System Perspective on the Social Sciences', in *The Capitalist World Economy*, Cambridge, 1979, pp. 152–64.
16. M. Rowlands, M. Larsen and K. Kristiansen (eds), *Centre and Periphery in the Ancient World*, Cambridge, 1985. P. Kohl, 'The Use and Abuse of World Systems Theory', *Advances in Archaeological Method and Theory*, 11 (1987), pp. 1–35. C. Edens, 'Dynamics of Trade in the Ancient Mesopotamian World System', *American Anthropologist*, 94, 1 (1922), pp. 118–39. T. Champion (ed.), *Centre and Periphery, Comparative Studies in Archaeology*, London, 1989. J. Schneider, 'Was There a Pre-capitalist World System?', *Peasant Studies*, 6, 1 (1977), pp. 20–9.
17. C. Humphrey and S. Hugh–Jones, *Barter, Exchange and Value*, Cambridge, 1992, Introduction.
18. C.A. Gregory, 'Gifts to Men and Gifts to God: Gift Exchange and Capital Accumulation in Contemporary Melanesia', *Man*, n.s. 15, 4 (1980), pp. 625–52. *Gifts and Commodities*, London, 1982.
19. K. Marx, *Capital*, 1, Harmondsworth, 1976, p. 163.
20. J.C. Van Leur, *Indonesian Trade and Society*, The Hague, 1967.
21. H.G. Rawlinson, *Intercourse between India and the Western World, from the Earliest Times to the Fall of Rome*, Cambridge, 1916. E.H. Warmington, *The Commerce between the Roman Empire and India*, London, 1928, 1974 revised. J.I. Miller, *The Spice Trade of the Roman Empire*, Oxford, 1969. R.E.M. Wheeler, A. Ghosh and Krishna Deva, 'Arikamedu: An Indo-Roman Trading Station on the East Coast of India', *Ancient India*, 2 (1946), pp. 17–125. R.E.M. Wheeler, *Rome Beyond the Imperial Frontier*, London, 1955. 'Roman Contact with India, Pakistan and Afghanistan', in W.F. Grimes (ed.), *Aspects of Archaeology in Britain and Beyond: Essays Presented to O.G.S. Crawford*, London, 1951, pp. 345–81.
22. Pliny, *Natural History*, 6.26.101.
23. *Periplus*, pp. 25–6. Motichandra, *Sārthavāha*, Patna, 1953, pp. 119ff.
24. P.M. Fraser, *Ptolemaic Alaxandria*, 1, Oxford, 1972, p. 543.
25. K.N. Chaudhuri, *Trade and Civilisation in the Indian Ocean*, p. 130.
26. *Periplus*, pp. 18–19, 26. Strabo, 16.4.22–4.
27. Strabo, 2.5.12; 2.118.
28. W. Scmitthammer, 'Rome and India: Aspects of Universal History During the Principate', *Journal of Roman Studies*, 69 (1979), pp. 90–106.

29. R. Salomon, 'Epigraphic Remains of Indian Traders in Egypt', *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, 3, 4 (1991), pp. 731–6.
30. Two pot-sherds with Tamil Brāhmī inscriptions—*catan* and *kapan*—were found at Quseir-al-Qadim, a port on the Egyptian side of the Red Sea. D.S. Whitecomb and J.H. Johnson, *Quseir-al-Qadim 1978: Preliminary Report*, Cairo, 1979; *Quseir-al-Qadim 1980: Preliminary Report*, Malibu, 1982.
31. Tamil Brāhmī graffiti on pot-sherds also occurs at Arikamedu. Wheeler, Ghosh and Deva, 'Arikamedu', 109ff.
32. Salomon, 'Epigraphic Remains of Indian Traders in Egypt'.
33. Casson, *PME*, pp. 22ff.
34. P. Turner, *Roman Coins from India*, London, 1989.
35. *Periplus*, p. 49.
36. *Suppāraka Jātaka*, 11.463.
37. R. Thapar, 'Patronage and Community', in B. Stoler Miller (ed.), *The Powers of Art*, Delhi, 1992, pp. 1–34. See chapter 14 in volume IV. Vidya Dehejia, 'Collective and Popular Bases of Early Buddhist Patronage: Sacred Monuments, 100 BC–AD 250', in Miller, *The Powers of Art*, pp. 35–45.
38. S.B. Deo and R. Gupte, *Excavation at Bhokardan*, Nagpur, 1974.
39. *Epigraphia Indica*, 8 (1905–6), pp. 82ff, 89ff.
40. *Epigraphia Indica*, 5, Luders List nos 1131, 1133, 1099. K.L. Mahalay, 'Rise and Fall in the Commercial Significance of the Deccan Caves', *Deccan Geographer*, 11 (1973), pp. 1–17. C. Margabandhu, 'Trade Contacts Between Western India and the Greco-Roman World', *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, 8 (1965), pp. 316–22. H.P. Ray, *Monastery and Guild*, Delhi, 1986.
41. M. Meister, 'Sub-Urban Planning and Rock-cut Architecture', in *Madhu: Recent Researches in Indian Archaeology and Art History*, Delhi, 1981, pp. 157–64.
42. H.D. Sankalia, S.B. Deo and B. Subbarao, *Excavations at Maheswar and Navdatoli, 1952–3*, Poona, 1958; B.K. Thapar, 'Prakash 1955: A Chalcolithic Site in the Tapti Valley', *Ancient India*, 20, 21 (1964–5), pp. 5–167. S.B. Deo and R.S. Gupte, *Excavations at Bhokardan, 1973*, Nagpur, 1974; B.N. Chapekar, *Report on the Excavation at Ter*, Poona, 1969.
43. J. Burgess and B. Indraji, *Inscriptions from the Cave Temples of Western India*, Delhi, 1976 (reprint), pp. 47, 54.
44. *Cullaka-seṭṭhi Jātaka*, 1.4; *Akatannu Jātaka*, 1.90; *Makasa Jātaka*, 1.44; *Sussondi Jātaka*, 5.360.
45. C. Margabandhu, 'Two Clay Bullae (medallions) from Junagarh', *Visvesvaranand Indological Journal*, 8, 2 (1975), pp. 1–7. *Archaeology of the Sātavāhana Kṣatrapa Times*, Delhi, 1985.
46. K.N. Chaudhuri, *Trade and Civilisation in the Indian Ocean*, pp. 184ff.

47. H.D. Sankalia and S.B. Deo, *Report on the Excavations at Nasik and Jorwe, 1950–1*, Poona, 1955; H.D. Sankalia et al., *From History to Prehistory at Nevasa, 1954–56*, Poona, 1960; B. Subbarao, *Baroda Through the Ages*, Baroda, 1953; R.N. Mehta and S.N. Chowdhury, *Excavations at Devnimori*, Baroda, 1966; R.N. Mehta and D.R. Shah, *Excavations at Nagara*, Baroda, 1968; S.B. Deo and R.S. Gupte, *Excavation at Bhokardan*, Nagpur, 1974; Relevant reports in *Indian Archaeology—A Review*; M. Dikshit, *History of Indian Glass*, Bombay, 1969.
48. J.A.B. Palmer, 'Periplus Mari Erythrae, the Indian Evidence as to the Date', *The Classical Quarterly*, 41 (1947), pp. 136–40. D.W. Macdowall, 'The Early Western Satraps and the Date of the Periplus', *The Numismatic Chronicle*, 4 (1964), pp. 271–80. G. Mathew, 'The Dating and Significance of the Periplus of the Erythreaen Sea', in N. Chittick and R.I. Rotberg (eds), *East Africa and the Orient*, London, 1975, pp. 147–63. See also L. Casson, 'Sakas versus Andras in the Periplus Mari Erythrae', *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, 26, 2 (1983), pp. 164–77, for a different reading of the text.
49. *Akam*, 149.7–11.
50. Pliny, *Natural History*, 12.14.28. Four *denarii* per pound for black pepper and seven and fifteen respectively for white and long pepper.
51. K.N. Chaudhuri, *Trade and Civilisation in the Indian Ocean*, p. 191.
52. Pliny, *Natural History*, 6.26.105. L. Casson, *PME*, p. 221. *Periplus*, p. 56.
53. Pliny, *Natural History*, 12.14.28.
54. F.R. Allchin, 'Upon the Antiquity and Methods of Gold Mining in Ancient India', *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, 5, 2 (1962), pp. 195–211. 'Antiquity of Gold-mining in the Gadag Region—Karnataka', *Madhu*, Delhi, 1981.
55. Turner, *Roman Coins from India*, p. 16.
56. Warmington, *The Commerce between the Roman Empire and India*, Delhi, 1974, pp. 277, 292.
57. D.W. Macdowell, 'Indian Imports of Roman Silver Coins', paper read at the Third International Colloquium, Nasik, 1990.
58. Allchin, 'Upon the Antiquity and Methods of Gold Mining in Ancient India'.
59. A. Appadurai (ed.), *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in the Cultural Perspective*, Cambridge, 1988, Introduction.
60. Pliny, *Natural History*, 6.26.105.
61. K. Kailasapathy, *Tamil Heroic Poetry*, Oxford, 1968. A.K. Ramanujam, *Poems of Love and War*, New York, 1985. K.V. Zvelebil, *Tamil Literature*, Wiesbaden, 1974. *The Smile of Murugan*, London, 1973.
62. *Periplus*, pp. 53–6.
63. K.V. Raman, Presidential Address, Numismatic Society of India, Visva Bharati, 1990. A recent report of finds said to be of indigenous coins of

the Cēras, Cōḷas and Pāṇḍyas of this period, with one coin at least showing a trace of Roman numismatic influence, suggests fresh dimensions to the numismatic evidence and the exchange systems should these be found to be authentic. R. Krishnamurthy, 'Sangam Period Chera Silver Coin with a Portrait and a Legend', paper read at the First Oriental Numismatic Congress, Nagpur, 1990. See also the publications in Tamil by the same author on Cōḷas and Pāṇḍyas and Malaiyamān coins, 1986–90. R. Champakalakshmi, pers. com.

64. Wheeler, Ghosh and Deva, 'Arikamedu', pp. 17–24. Begley, 'Arikamedu Reconsidered'.
65. The identification is with Virai and has been discussed in R. Champakalakshmi, 'Archaeology and Tamil Literary Tradition', *Puratattva*, 8 (1975–6), pp. 117ff. I. Mahadevan, 'The Ancient Name of Arikamedu', in N. Subrahmaniam (ed.), *Surya Narayana Sastri Centenary Volume*, Madras, 1970, pp. 204ff.
66. The *Śilappadikāram*, 14.116. Refers to aromatic wood and camphor being brought to the port of Kāveripaṭṭinam and this, it has been suggested, may have been cargo from south-east Asia. V.R.R. Dikshitar, *The Śilappadikāram*, Madras, 1939, 14.116n. I. Mahadevan has read the graffiti on one potsherd as a name in Old Sinhalese.
67. Wheeler, Ghosh and Deva, 'Arikamedu', pp. 17ff.
68. Begley, 'Arikamedu Reconsidered'.
69. Casson, *PME*, pp. 228–9.
70. *Śilappadikāram*, 6.128–44; 5.7ff.
71. Nagaswamy, 'Alagankulam: An Indo-Roman Trading Station'.
72. L. Casson, 'Rome's Trade with the Eastern Coast of India', *Cahiers d'Histoire*, 1988, pp. 3–4, pp. 303–8.
73. H. Sarkar, 'Kesarpalle 1962', 22, *Ancient India*, 22 (1966), pp. 37–74.
74. Hathigumpha Inscription. D.C. Sircar, *Select Inscriptions ...*, 1, Calcutta, 1965, pp. 213–20. An early second-century inscription at Guntur could be that of an Aira Mahāmeghavāhana ruler, thus lending some credence to Khāravela's claim. Velpuru Inscription, *Epigraphia Indica*, 32, pp. 82–7.
75. *Epigraphia Indica*, 2, pp. 323–9; 15, pp. 258–75.
76. P.L. Gupta, *Roman Coins from Andhra Pradesh*, APGMS, No. 10, Hyderabad, 1965. Turner, *Roman Coins from India*, pp. 29ff.
77. *Periplus*, p. 62. Ptolemy, 7.1.15–93.
78. K. Raghavachari, 'Dharanikota', in A. Ghosh (ed.), *An Encyclopaedia of Indian Archaeology*, 11, Delhi, 1989, p. 126.
79. Turner, *Roman Coins from India*, pp. 32–6.
80. Turner, *Roman Coins from India*, p. 41.
81. Casson, *PME*, p. 236.
82. I.W. Mabbett, 'The "Indianisation" of Southeast Asia: Reflections of the Prehistoric Sources', *Journal of South East Asian Studies*, 8, 1 (1977), pp. 1–14;

H. Kulke, *The Devaraja Cult*, Cornell, 1978; H. Kulke, 'The Early and the Imperial Kingdom in Southeast Asian History', in D.G. Marr and A.C. Milner (eds), *Southeast Asia in the 9th–14th Centuries*, Singapore, 1986.

83. R. Fynes in his unpublished D. Phil. thesis, 'Cultural Transmission between Roman Egypt and Western India', Oxford, 1991, argues that the evolution of the goddess Pattini in south India was deeply influenced by the cult of Isis. This is a plausible idea but the evidence is not wholly convincing. Isis was of course the major deity at Coptos. W.M.F. Petrie, *Koptos*, London, 1986, pp. 17ff.
84. A.E. Medlycott, *India and the Apostle Thomas*, London, 1905. E.O. Winstedt. *The Christian Topography of Cosmas Indicopleustes*, Cambridge, 1909; S. Neal, *A History of Christianity in India: the Beginnings to* AD *1707*, Cambridge, 1984.
85. Winstedt, *The Christian Topography of Cosmas Indicopleustes.*
86. S.G. Pothan, *The Syrian Christians of Kerala*, Bombay, 1963, pp. 101ff. In the second millennium AD there is a Christian diaspora which links the Christians of south India to those in the eastern Mediterranean trade, a reversal of the situation of the Yavanas who became Buddhists.
87. P. Rousseau, *Ascetics, Authority and the Church*, Oxford, 1978.
88. Romila Thapar, 'Indian Views of Europe: Representations of the "Other" in History?'. See chapter 12 in this volume.
89. J.E. Mitchner, *The Yuga Purāna*, Calcutta, 1986; D.C. Sircar, *Studies in Yugapurāṇa and Other Texts*, Delhi, 1974.
90. D. Pingree, *The Yavanajātaka of Sphujidhvaja*, 1, Camb. Mass., 1978, Introduction and Text.
91. Pingree, *The Yavanajātaka of Sphujidhvaja*, chapters 21 and 22.
92. G. Buhler and J. Burgess, 'Report on the Buddhist Cave Temples and Their Inscriptions', *Archaeological Survey of Western India*, 4 (reprint), Varanasi, 1964, pp. 82–140. *Epigraphia Indica*, 7 (1902–3), pp. 47–74; 8 (1905–6), pp. 59–96; 18 (1925–6), pp. 325–9.
93. J. Burgess and B. Indraji, *Inscriptions from the Cave Temples of Western India*, nos 7, 10 (reprint), Varanasi, 1976, pp. 31–2; *Epigraphia Indica*, 7, pp. 53–5. See also the discussion on a possible rock-cut Buddhist temple at Petra, H. Goetz, 'An Unfinished Early Indian Temple at Petra, Transjordania', *East and West*, n.s. 24 (1974), pp. 245–8.
94. Pingree, *The Yavanajātaka of Sphujidhvaja.*
95. S.C. Laeuchli, 'Yavana Inscriptions of Western India', *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bombay* (1981–4), pp. 56–9, 207–21.
96. Strabo, 2.3.4; 17.1.45. Pliny, *Natural History*, 6.26.101. Raschke, 'New Studies in Roman Commerce with the East', p. 241. Scmitthammer, 'Rome and India: Aspects of Universal History During the Principate'.

97. D.D. Kosambi, 'Dhenukākata', *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bombay*, n.s. 30, 2 (1955), pp. 50–71.

98. *Epigraphia Indica*, 18 (1925–6), p. 326.

99. *Akam*, 149.7–11.

100. *Puram*, 56.16–21; *Puram*, 343.1–10.

101. *Patirrupattu* II, patikam, pp. 4–10.

102. *Śilappadikāram*, 28.142; 29. Usal's song.

103. *Maṇimēkalai*, 19, 108. *Śilappadikāram*, 5.7ff; 14.62.

104. Tacitus, *The Annals*, 3.52–4. Pliny, *Natural History*, 6.26.101; 12.41.84.

105. Pliny, *Natural History*, 6.101; 12.84.

106. Miller, *The Spice Trade of the Roman Empire*, pp. 222ff.

107. P. Veyne, 'Rome devant la prétendue fuite de I' or ...', *Annales*, 34, 2 (1979), pp. 211ff. A detailed picture of the items which travelled within Egypt as part of this trade is provided by A.C. Johnson, *Roman Egypt to the Reign of Diocletian*, Baltimore, 1936.

108. Raschke, 'New Studies in Roman Commerce with the East', p. 673.

109. A. Bernardi, 'The Economic Problems of the Roman Empire at the Time of Its Decline', in CM. Cipolla, *The Economic Decline of Empires*, London, 1970, pp. 16–83. R. Duncan-Jones, *Structure and Scale in the Roman Economy*, pp. 172–3.

110. G. Gunderson, 'Economic Change and the Demise of the Roman Empire', *Explorations in Economic History*, 13, 1 (1976), pp. 43–68. J.L. Anderson and T. Lewit, 'Contact with the Barbarians? Economics and the Fall of Rome', *Explorations in Economic History*, 29, 1 (1992), pp. 99–115.

111. In AD 297 Coptos was destroyed by Diocletian and in AD 273 Palmyra was sacked by Aurelian.

112. J. Paterson, 'Salvation from the Sea ...', *Journal of Roman Studies*, 2 (1982), pp. 146–57. That there was a trade with the western Mediterranean is indicated by the stamps on the amphorae. Other items traded in the Mediterranean such as timber and marble are not part of the Egyptian economy.

113. R.P. Duncan Jones, *The Economy of the Roman Empire*, Oxford, 1974. P.A. Brunt, *Journal of Roman Studies*, 71 (1981), pp. 162ff.

114. Petrie, *Koptos*, pp. 26–7.

115. S.L. Wallace, *Taxation in Egypt*, Princeton, 1933, p. 253.

116. Petrie, *Koptos*, pp. 32–3.

117. Johnson, *Roman Egypt to the Reign of Diocletian*, pp. 400ff.

118. L. Casson, 'P. Vindob. G. 40822 and the Shipping of Goods from India', *Bulletin of the American Society of Papyrologists*, 23 (1986), pp. 73–9. L. Casson, 'New Light on Maritime Laws: P. Vindob. G. 40822', *Zcirschrift fur Papyrologie und Epigraphik*, 84 (1990), pp. 195–206. The document was earlier published by H. Harrauer and P. Sijpesteijin, 'Ein neues Dokument zu Roms

Indienhandel, P. Vindob. G. 40822', *Anzeiger der Osterreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften*, 122 (1985), pp. 124–55.

119. L.C. West and A.C. Johnson, *Currency in Roman and Byzantine Egypt*, New Jersey, 1944, pp. 180ff.
120. J.G. Tait, *Greek Ostraca in the Bodleian Library at Oxford, and Various Other Centres*, 1, London, 1930.
121. S.L. Wallace, *Taxation in Egypt*, Princeton, 1938, pp. 181ff.
122. Tait, *Greek Ostraca in the Bodleian Library at Oxford, and Various Other Centres*.
123. D.J. Thompson, 'Nile Grain Transport under the Ptolemies', in P. Garnsey et al., *Trade in the Ancient Economy*, pp. 64–76. D. Meredith, 'The Roman Remains in the Eastern Desert of Egypt', *Journal of Egyptian Archaeology*, 38 (1952), pp. 94–111; 39 (1953), pp. 95–106. This point has been discussed in some detail by Richard Fynes in his unpublished Oxford D.Phil. thesis, 'Cultural Transmission between Roman Egypt and Western India'.
124. T.F. Glasson, The *Revelation of John*, Cambridge, 1965, chapter 18. Babylon in *The Relevations* was the code name of Rome. The phrase 'scarlet harlot' was used by Keith Hopkins who drew my attention to this passage.
125. C.R. Whittaker, 'Late Roman Trade and Traders', in P. Garnsey et al., *Trade in the Ancient Economy*, p. 167.
126. L. Duchesne, *Le Liber Pontificalis: Texte, Introduction et Commentaire*, I, Paris, 1955–7, p. 174: III, p. 177 and p. 194. The amounts referred to were aromate 200 pounds, nardinum 200 pounds and balsam 35 pounds. I am grateful to Simon Price for help in locating the references and to Keith Hopkins for referring me to the text.

14

*Time Concepts, Social Identities and Historical Consciousness in Early India**

For many decades now it has been argued that a single, cyclic concept of time characterised Indian civilisation. This view was so firmly held that the argument was extended to maintain that cyclic time prevented the evolving of a sense of history. This became a distinguishing feature of Indian perceptions of the past which were therefore said to be a-historical. Among the more recent and influential proponents of this view was Mircea Eliade who wrote of the Indian myth of eternal return. But the argument had an ancestry that goes back to the early Orientalists as is evident from the introduction to the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* by Horace Hyman Wilson. The repeated mention of cyclic time in the sources was doubtless one of the reasons for this argument.

Some scholars did suggest that there was a strand of linear time in certain texts, but the prevailing view was that time was seen as cyclic with no firm beginning or termination. This was thought to obstruct a differentiation between history and myth. It was contrasted with the Judeo-Christian eschatology of the Garden of Eden at the start and Judgement Day at the end. Repeating cycles repeated events and thus minimized the centrality of human action.

I have argued that in addition to cyclic time there was also a linear concept, not necessarily described as such, but implicit in a variety of forms. Many of these were more pertinent to records that were viewed as reflecting a historical consciousness. Linear time had a different function from cyclic time, but the two did intersect on occasion and this intersection has its own interest. The use of time as a marker of identity is less precise in the cyclic form but is strongly imprinted in linear forms. The notion of cyclic time is essentially cosmological, and one of its functions was to provide an imagined time context to myth. Linear time is foundational to a perceived historical rendering of the past dependent on human activity. Questions relating to memory and identity can perhaps be seen as part of the intersection of the two concepts.

Cyclic and linear are qualifiers which are derived from the way time is presented, particularly if it is represented as a form. There are of course many more categories of time than these two. The categorization is largely, although not solely, dependent on the function of time. Thus social groups often differentiate and identify themselves by adopting varying categories of time for varying functions. But forms of time determining historical interests have largely been these two, and cyclic time was the one associated with India. I would like to consider both forms in juxtaposition, the first already discussed at length by scholars and the second having entered the discussion more recently.

The earliest unit mentioned in the texts was the *yuga*—marking a particular conjuncture. Initially it covered a period of a few years and later the most convenient conjuncture settled at a period of five years. The repetition of this pattern within a time period suggested a cycle and this was seminal to cosmic time. But the cycle of time associated with calculations in astronomy was to grow to an immense size, as required for the calculations. This conditioned notions of cyclic time.

The notion of time moving in a cycle probably derived from the cycle of seasons and the recurring rituals of the year. It is measured by natural changes of climate and landscape and the observance of rituals relating to these. It is therefore projected as a time frame that is natural, and to that extent is cosmic. Linear time by contrast is a measurement of time controlled by human decision. It is easier to manipulate linear time in the ordering of society. The construction of cyclic time was also of human authorship but unlike linear time it extended beyond the human dimension into imagined time. Measurements of the cycles expanded and became complex. Cyclic time can encompass linear time and to that extent they can flow together. But the two are also on occasion in contradistinction since repetition breaks linearity.

Concepts of time are reflected in calendars, even those not explicitly formulated as such. The earlier forms had a variety of markers of time, many that were common to virtually every society in the ancient world.

The predictable were the movements of the sun and the moon. Natural catastrophes, such as floods and wars, although unpredictable nevertheless, overwhelmed society. The movement of the sun was reflected in the solstices—the *uttarāyaṇa*/summer solstice and the *dakṣināyana*/winter solstices. As a counterpoint to these was the demarcating of the equinox/*viṣuva*, perhaps also inspired by the central ritual in a sacrifice. It was easier to keep track of the movements of the moon in its phases and in relation to the constellations—the month/*māsa*; and the phases of the moon with the neat division of the two lunar fortnights of *śuklapakṣa* and *kṛṣṇapakṣa*, could be further sub-divided into days/*tithi* and the day into smaller measurements such as the *muhūrta*.

The lunar and solar calendars were not necessarily maintained as distinct demarcations of time, even if their functions could be different. Attempts were made to chart points where the two coincided, attempts that sometimes involved intercalation. The calendar of rituals was often easier to track if lunar measurements were used, and agricultural activities related more closely to the solar. A luni-solar calendar seemed to provide the answer. The time cycle was called the *yuga* and was the unit of cosmological and astronomical time.

The relatively simple time reckoning of the *yuga* gradually evolved into a grandiose plan of immensely bigger cycles. The structure for the framework of the *yugas* is described in texts such as the later sections of the *Mahābhārata*, the Manu *Dharmaśāstra* and the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa*. These descriptions assume a form that had been absent in earlier texts. It is interesting that the change occurs in the early Christian era and may have been associated with other changes. This was the period that was seminal to Puranic Hinduism, in many ways a departure from Vedic Brahmanism. Presumably it required a different kind of cosmology especially in relation to time reckoning. There were also at this time exchanges of knowledge between India and the Hellenistic world. Among these were knowledge of astronomy and medicine. With the migrating into India of large numbers of peoples from central Asia—the Śakas, Parthians and Kuṣāṇas, doubtless bringing divergent mythologies, there would have been an interest in the firming up of a cosmology of time.

In setting out cyclic time, the largest cycle was the *kalpa*, infinite and immeasurable. It is said to begin with creation and continues until the cataclysmic termination of the universe. As part of cosmology the *kalpa* is often represented spatially, but in such a manner that it could not be measured in temporal terms. For instance, a Buddhist description of the *kalpa* reads as follows: if there is a cube-shaped mountain measuring approximately three miles on each side and if every hundred years the mountain is brushed with a silk scarf, and according to some this was held in the beak of an eagle flying over the mountain, then the time taken for the mountain to be eroded is a *kalpa*. A description from an Ajivika text states that: if there is a river that is 117,649 times the size of the Ganges, and if every hundred years one grain of sand is removed from its bed, then the time required for the removal of all the sand would be one unit of measure; and it takes three thousand of these units to make one *kalpa*. That the action took place every hundred years introduces a temporal dimension of humanly manageable real time, nevertheless the image is essentially spatial. The length of the *kalpa* is a deliberate transgression of time and the silk scarf would have quickly disintegrated. And who could remove the grains of sand from the bed of a flowing river.

The notion of the temporal length of the *kalpa* as given in some brahmanical texts, may have come from contemporary astronomy where the length of the *kalpa* was reckoned as 4,320,000 years. The figure had to be enormous so as to be large enough for calculations in astronomy. The same figure was used in cosmology for the *mahāyuga*, the great cycle. But the *mahāyuga* was divided into four lesser ones of unequal length. Some astronomers such as Āryabhaṭṭa maintained that the divisions were of equal length and some later astronomers used different figures. It is likely that there was a dialogue between cosmologists and astronomers, although it remains unclear as to who borrowed from whom. Perhaps cosmology was seeking legitimacy by borrowing the figures used by the astronomers. However, in saying this I may be indulging in my twentieth century positivist view of the data!

There appear to have been two systems of calculating the cycles, that of the *mahāyugas* and that of the *manvantaras*. Attempts are sometimes made to reconcile the two but the fit is not sufficiently close. I shall however confine myself to the first. This appears to have been more commonly used. Each *mahayuga* consisted of four lesser cycles or ages sandwiched within twilight periods. The four were perceived as the Kṛta or Satya which was the first consisting of four thousand divine years, then came the Treta of three thousand years, followed by the Dvāpara of two thousand years, and finally the Kaliyuga of a thousand years. The figures for the twilight periods also follow a descending arithmetic progression, from eight hundred to two hundred. Altogether these make twelve thousand divine years and are multiplied by 360 to convert them into 4, 320, 000 years.

Apart from the first, the names of the four ages were taken from the throws at dice, thus introducing an element of chance into the flow of time. The present age has been called "the age of the losing throw". The start of the Kaliyuga begins with describing the position of the constellations. This has been calculated as equivalent to 3102 BC. In contrast to the immensity of the cycle we are told that the length of a human life is that of a dew-drop on the tip of a blade of grass at sunrise.

The descending arithmetic progression in the length of the four cycles points to a concern with a mathematical orderliness and pattern, even if the figures are imagined. There is a play on numbers such as 7, 12, 432, that were regarded as magical in India as well as in Mesopotamian and Hellenistic sources. Since the length of the cycles is not identical there was a difference from one cycle to another and some unique events were possible.

The mathematical pattern underlined the scheme of the social and sacred ordering of society as formulated in brahmanical normative texts. The first and longest age, the Krtayuga, encapsulated an initial utopia. Subsequently there was a decline in each of the succeeding ages, until finally the Kaliyuga was associated with degeneration. The symbols of decline are easily recognisable and are common to many cultures: the human body becomes smaller and the life-span is shorter; marriage becomes necessary to procreation since men and women are no longer born as adult couples; and above all human beings have to labour in order to live. There is also an abundance of heretics and unrighteous people. In one text it is said that *dharma*—the essential social and sacred duty—is like a bull that stands on four legs at the start, but with each age it drops one leg. This is a picturesque way of stating that there was a substantial change from one age to the next, and the Kaliyuga is unstable.

The change is particularly pertinent to the increasing distancing of people from the norms of a society based on caste as envisaged in *varṇa*. In predicting the future it is said that the status and functions of the upper castes will be usurped by the lower castes. Rituals that had hitherto been guarded as a *brahmana* preserve would now be performed indiscriminately by any caste. An even bigger disaster will be the liberation of women as this would undermine caste society that required the subordination of women and their acquiescence in patriarchy. This was a description of a distopia as seen from the brahmanical perspective, but implicitly it was the utopia of the lower castes. It has been argued that this description of the Kaliyuga mirrored the changes that were occurring in northern India in the early centuries AD. The influx of migrant populations, and the dynasties of the degenerate or *vrātya kṣatriyas*, introduced many social changes. Such societies did not maintain the social norms of the *dharma-śāstras*. This was said despite the endorsing of *dharma-śāstra* norms in the earliest Sanskrit inscription issued by a Śaka king Rudradaman in the second century AD. However, it can equally well be argued that these statements need not have referred to actual changes but the fear that they might come about. Theoretically some non-brahmanical sects were supporting such ideas. Any dominant group unable to sustain an unchallenged dominance would have feared a loss of dominance. There is also the logic of cycles: that an upswing has to be complemented by a downswing.

The decline of *dharma* and the transgression of caste norms associated with the Kaliyuga, suggests that cyclic time was closely associated with a preference for brahmanical norms. The function of cyclic time is to perpetuate the norms and to which a return is made with each new *mahāyuga*. The recitation at, and performance of, rituals associated with cyclic regeneration enacted the myths of cyclic time, and such rituals drew upon *brāhmaṇa* ritual specialists. The nature of time-markers such as the cataclysmic end to the great cycle or the messianic coming of Kalkin underlines an element of permanence in the cycle of time. However the transgression of social norms was associated with the end of time.

The logic of events in the Kaliyuga is that conditions will deteriorate to such an extent that those faithful to the norms will flee to the hills and await the coming of the last incarnation of Viṣṇu in the form of the *brāhmaṇa* Kalkin. He will restore the norms of caste society. The concept of Kalkin echoes, although it is not identical with, the large number of saviour figures that emerged as part of the expectations of various religious sects of the eastern Mediterranean and west Asia. In each case they were seen as coming to save the true doctrine from extinction and re-establish the original teachings. Thus we have the Buddha Maitreya, Saoshyant among Zoroastrians and John of the Revelations among Christians. The coming of Kalkin was an alternative reading to the cataclysmic end of the *mahāyuga*. Kalkin initiates another golden age. History does not end, time does not cease.

These changes in the cycle were also linked to an increase or decrease of *dharma*—sacred and social obligations. The utopia is placed at the start of the cycle. But the cycle does not necessarily return to it if a new cycle is inaugurated by the coming of Kalkin, although his coming initiates utopian conditions. The four cycles within the *mahāyuga* do not return to their beginnings but move into the next and smaller cycles. Such a continuity hints at a different form from just a cycle. It could be a helix or a spiral, and if stretched could form a wave or even perhaps a not very straight line.

The start of the Kaliyuga has been calculated to a precise point in cyclic time and this also marks the start of linear time. Even though linear time forms part of the cycle it was perceived as different. This is highlighted in relation to the current cycle, and the former three cycles can be seen as the prehistory, as it were, of the present. Unlike cyclic time which is described in a variety of texts, linear time is most evident in the *Purāṇa*s and in particular the *Viṣṇu* and *Matsya Purāṇa*s among the earlier texts of this category. Interestingly both concepts of time are to be found in the same *Viṣṇu Purāṇa*. The earlier chapters describe the *mahāyuga* and its components, and a chapter towards the end—the *vaṃśānucarita* section—describes the events that form part of linear time. It is curious that H.H.Wilson recognised only the presence of cyclic time when he was editing the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa*, and missed the obvious pattern of linear time.

The *vaṃśānucarita* section is concerned with the flow of historical succession and encapsulates the start of linear time. This is calculated on a different set of premises from cyclic time. It is based on human activity and the notion of causation is implicit even if it is not clearly stated. This is a contrast to cyclic time where human intervention is negated and even the coming of Kalkin is a pre-ordained incarnation of Viṣṇu. At most it can be said that Kalkin comes when the norms of society are subverted. But the narration is in the future tense and Kalkin is inevitable and predictable.

The *vaṃśānucarita* narrative becomes foundational to a perspective of the past in a range of texts purporting to be concerned with *itihāsa* and can, in a manner of speaking, be detached from the cycle. Historical consciousness implicit in *itihāsa*, has a linear form. Not all these sources were necessarily historical or accurate, in fact few were, but the time framework was linear. Social demarcations are noticeable, less in the events and more in the change of authorship. Tradition has it that what was believed to be the record of historical succession was initially preserved by the *sūta*/bard.

But when a control over the past became an important mechanism of legitimising kings, as from the early centuries AD, the record was often compiled, edited and appropriated by the *brāhmaṇas*, and incorporated into some *Purāṇas*, or later into Chronicles.

The *vaṃśānucarita* section begins with the age of the Manus. The first time-marker is the great Flood. A deluge clears away the past and prepares for the future. Viṣṇu in his *matsya-avatāra*/fish-incarnation helps Manu to survive. Subsequent to the Flood therefore, Manu becomes the progenitor of succeeding generations. In the Vaiṣṇava reading, the *matsya* incarnation of Viṣṇu at the beginning and Kalkin at the end, are the two termini of the time frame and suggest an eschatology.

The succession of heroes that emerged when the Flood receded were allotted an identity in one of two distinct descent groups—the Sūryavaṃśa and the Candravaṃśa. This evoked a symbolism not unconnected with calendars and time—the sun and the moon. But these were also symbols of social dichotomies because although the status of the heroes was that of *kṣatriyas*, the pattern of their genealogies marked a social differentiation. The solar line practised primogeniture, and therefore claimed to record descent only from the eldest son to the eldest son. The *Ramayana* was the narrative of the descendants of Ikṣvāku who was ancestral to the Sūryavaṃśa. This epic became the foundation text of the solar lineage. The other descent group, the Candravaṃśa or lunar lineage had a pattern of segmentary clans, primarily of the Yādavas and the Pūrus. The pattern therefore kept fanning out since all the sons and their sons were recorded, not just the eldest. This is also a system by which unrelated clans can be incorporated into the genealogies. These lineages were theoretically at least, progenitors of the protagonists in the *Mahābhārata*. This text became the source for narratives of the Candravaṃśa. There were marginal overlaps between the two epics but at a broad level they were distinctive.

Such lineage patterns were not to be taken literally as history. They were perceptions of the past and were ways of indicating variation in the societies of the past. The genealogies were constructed on what was presumed to be the succession of ruling clans and in later times these provided links to ruling dynasties. The lists cover over a hundred generations, and are in large part fabricated. Nevertheless they can be analysed not as authentic history, but as reflections of a consciousness of history. Time measured by generations as in genealogies, is essentially linear. The word used for succession, *vaṃśa*/bamboo or cane, is a visual demonstration of a node and succession. There are also various lesser time-markers and genealogical patterns in the *vaṃśānucarita* section, which underline sequential, linear time.

The presence of more than one form of time measurement in the same text is perhaps intended to point us towards different statements being made about each. Genealogical time or the counting of generations is at the start of the record whether in the *Purāṇa*s or the chronicles, and precedes that which we recognise as conventional history. Genealogies were important to societies where status was based on birth, lineage and kinship. Genealogies could be manipulated by being stretched or telescoped. This was less easy to do with dynastic descent but by no means impossible. Genealogies could also be manipulated for those being inducted into the society, as happened in the post-Gupta period. The link with the descent group could be established at a particular point in the genealogy. Some dynasties claimed descent from Lava and Kusa, the sons of Rama. Others claimed connections within the large network of descent groups of the Yādavas or the Pauravas. Manipulating genealogies is also suggestive of political power being relatively open.

The supposed history of the early heroes was then tied together as it were, in another time-marker, the battle at Kurukṣetra. Virtually all the clans were involved and the war terminated their glory. The focus of the text then changed to recording dynasties rather than descent groups. The list of successive rulers and their regnal years as given in some *Purāṇa*s, highlighted linear time. The dynasties were not related to each other as were the *kṣatriya rājā*s. Kings were of diverse castes—frequently *brāhmaṇa* or *śūdra*—not to mention what were called the *vratya* or degenerate *kṣatriya*s. Subsequent to the battle at Kurukṣetra, which marks the point of the start of the Kaliyuga, the story is narrated in the future tense. This is a significant way of pointing to change.

This point in time is also an intersection of cyclic and linear time. In the cyclic reckoning the Kaliyuga is associated with a particular stellar pattern, a point in time over which there is no human control, nor is the date marked by any particular human activity. In the linear reckoning, the start of the Kaliyuga is linked to events created and controlled by human activity, namely the period subsequent to the Kurukṣetra war.

In using the future tense and pretending to predict historical change, the narrative also invoked astrology. The political importance of astrology becomes more evident in the first millennium AD from inscriptions. This was when competition, contestation and insecurity increased, and prediction was doubtless seen as a form of attempting to control the present by prophesying the future. Astrology requires an auspicious moment and possibly this coincided with the political need to mark status by celebrating a moment in time. In addition linear time encouraged the use of yet another form of measuring historical time, namely, the creation of eras.

The historical era or the *samvatsara* became a symbol of political power and the royal court. The earliest inscriptions, those of the Mauryan emperor Aśoka are dated in regnal years. This is parallel to the regnal years associated with dynasties in some of the *Purāṇas*. But the recording of regnal years is not the same as using an era. The latter highlights a point in time and makes a claim to exalted status.

An early era used in historical sources was the Kṛta of 58 BC, later to be called the Mālava era and more frequently the Vikram era. There has been an on-going debate on what this era commemorates. It has now been suggested that it marks the accession of Azes I, who was however not the most important of early rulers. A calculation in astronomy as the basis of this era cannot be altogether ruled out. Kṛta means established, the Mālava peoples are associated with Ujjain, and Ujjain was the meridian and location for calculations in astronomy. This era, which continues to be used today, was familiar to an extensive geographical area.

Subsequent to this there is an outbreak of new eras. The rationale for these is linked to historical events although sometimes the date or the association or both are controversial. As time-markers they change from highlighting an event to becoming measurements of time but they use time to link events. The Śaka era of AD 78 is thought by some to mark the accession of Kaniṣka. The Gupta era of AD 319–20 records the establishing of Gupta power. This fashion continues and among others we have the Harṣa era of AD 606, the Cedi era of AD 248–9, and the Cālukya-Vikramā era of AD 1075 symbolising the supremacy of the Cālukya king, Vikramāditya VI. The establishing of an era was a sign of political supremacy. It could however have been a supremacy arising out of overcoming conflictual claims to the throne, as happened clearly in the case of Vikramāditya and is perhaps hinted at in the case of Harsa. Eras are time-markers yet eras in the form of dates indicate a different social concern from the use of the Flood and the Kurukṣetra war as time-markers. Eras are based on small measurements of time and reflect an attitude to time that is closely tied to historical events.

The association of identity with an era is more clearly demonstrated in the adoption of the date of the Buddha's *mahāparinirvāṇa* as an era, specific to Buddhist sources and concerns. A date was fixed upon and became the starting point of chronology, irrespective of its actual historical accuracy, although it was projected as accurate. The use of such an era was meant to emphasise the historicity of the religion.

The use of multiple eras points to interesting complexities in the societies of the time. Some of these eras would have originated in local events and systems of time reckoning, in tandem with the growth of regional kingdoms. The era became a link between local perceptions and the more exact measurements required in urban centres and royal courts. Different social groups used eras for recording various events. This then becomes another interface between cyclic and linear time. Apart from measuring time, the linear form is often identified as encapsulating regional or local concerns. Cosmological time is the more generalized time-reckoning that is drawn from what might be called the civilisational context and envelopes the regional forms. This could be seen as yet another aspect of the interface in the separation and mingling of the *mārga* and the *deśi*— the mainstream in contrast to the more localized cultural form. The perspective from the cyclic to the linear has sometimes to be seen not as a dichotomy but as a continuum. The question worth pursuing is, when in the history of a region, do both forms of time-reckoning become evident.

One function of these historical eras is their attempt to demarcate historical time from cosmological time. They occur most frequently in association with royal inscriptions, now regarded as the annals of Indian history. A document is judged as more authentic and authoritative if it is accompanied by a date. Inscriptions recording grants of land would require dates, necessary to prove the legality of the document. This would be an even more necessary requirement where the grant of land was a reward for predicting an eclipse or for what was believed to be the warding off of a disaster. The time of the eclipse would have to be meticulously dated. Such time reckoning could draw on both cosmological and historical time.

From about the mid-first millennium AD onwards inscriptions recording the official version of the events of a reign began to be issued as a normal procedure by a range of ruling families. Many began with narratives about the origins of the family that involved recounting the past and making connections. This took them from mythological origins to more recent events. Where actual social origins were obscure or low it became necessary to envelop them in fancy claims. Perceptions of the past were therefore important to these texts.

The legitimising of power included a range of activities. Among them was the making of grants of land, to individuals, religious beneficiaries and institutions such as the monastery and the temple. These would then act as a network of support for the ruling family and the royal court. The inscription recording the grant was a legal document and required dating with great precision. In a society increasingly given to astrology as was the post-Gupta elite, there was also the question of making the grant at the most auspicious moment and that moment had to be recorded. This was the occasion for obscure families who had risen to rulership to claim a status equivalent to that of established ruling families, a claim that the beneficiaries of the grants were ready to substantiate. The document accompanying the grant had to be inscribed on imperishable material—copper or stone—so that its permanence could be ensured should anyone later decide to challenge ownership of land or property. Grants, often bestowed in return for legitimation, had to be impressive in their generosity and there was much honour in being regarded as the most munificent ruler. A continuity of time even longer than that of the *kalpa* is assumed in the inscriptions which carry the formulaic phrase that the grant should last as long as the moon and sun endure.

A further category of texts reflecting linear time, were the *vaṃśāvalī*s, literally the path of succession. These were chronicles of dynasties or regions in various parts of the sub-continent and written from about the eleventh century onwards. The *Rājataraṅginī* of Kalhaṇa, a history of Kashmir written in the twelfth century, is the most quoted *vamsavali* and is justifiably regarded as a remarkable example of historical writing. Texts in the same genre, but less incisive, are those similar to the chronicle of Chamba, written in the shadow of the *Rājataraṅginī*. More distant places such as Kerala also had chronicles such as the *Mūṣakavaṃśakāvya* of Atula pertaining to north Malabar. The *vaṃśāvalī*, often beginning as an oral tradition, seems to assume visibility as a text at the point when a regional political entity evolved into a state, and was staking its claims to statehood. The records of the past were collated from various sources, and a chronicle was put together, sometimes providing a coherent history but not averse to some little mythology. The earlier sections of such chronicles often incorporate fragments of genealogical material from the *Purāṇas*. This was to legitimise the status of the ruling family. The fragments formed a prelude to what was viewed as the history of the region.

In the chronicles and the inscriptions, time is linear and the assumptions of cyclic time may be implicit but remain distant. Cyclic time is not denied but is part of a larger reckoning in which deities and incarnations play a major role rather than human heroes. Events relating to the human scale are more properly expressed as part of linear time which was the more functional. Yet it is precisely in an inscription that there is the most precise and evident expression of the intersection of cyclic and linear time. A seventh century inscription of Pulakeśin II in a temple at Aihole in the Deccan records an event in the Śaka era of AD 78, and includes a reference to the date calculated in terms of the Kaliyuga. This enables us to cross-check the date of the Kaliyuga and calculate its equivalence in the modern calendar. What seems to have been essential was the historical date whereas the reference to the Kaliyuga may have been additional. Curiously the date is not given in figures but in words.

Linear time within the Kaliyuga creates an intersection with the cyclic. It is almost as if a small segment of the cycle is stretched to a more linear form. Or, that the linear is a small arc of the large circle. The cyclic then encompasses the linear and becomes a temporal frame within which any past could be accommodated. The *vaṃśānucarita* section becomes part of the calculation of the *yuga*, yet it also retains a distinctiveness that separates it from the *yuga*. That there was simultaneous use of more than one measurement of time, suggests a parallel with a more recent European discussion of historical time, namely that of Fernand Braudel. He argues that the historian has to handle three categories of time in terms of depth. The long durée goes back to geological time and incorporates a changing landscape. Less extensive is the period of a few centuries that determine social and economic history. Finally there is the momentary time of the event. The first encompasses the second and third and therefore each has a component of the others. This introduces the notion of simultaneous time measurements.

Time was tied into social and political functions. These can be seen either in the diverse authorship of historical traditions, or else in the use of time for diverse purposes as in the genealogical records. The earlier ones were maintained by the *sūta*/bard, incorporating the worldview and the social requirements of the ruling clans, where time was measured by generations and by kinship relations. But when this record was taken over by *brāhmaṇa* authors and re-compiled, the concern was less with measuring generations and more with establishing the social claims—whether actual or fictive—of the dynasties. The editing of the record therefore changed hands from the *sūta* to the *brāhmaṇa* in accordance with the function that the record was supposed to perform. Neither editors nor patrons were consistently of the same social group. The past as a qualifier of status, allows linear time to be treated as social time.

The capturing of the past is tied to the writing of history. The question then is at what point does history come to be recorded? It would be used not just to legitimise a ruling family but also the system so represented. Possibly the most pertinent time was when multiple identities had to be converted to a few effective identities or in the case of a dominant group, into a single identity. Does the consciousness of linear time coincide with the formation of an independent state system? And does it take its form from the parallel establishment of a dominant religion? Monastic chronicles attempt to capture this change. The simultaneous use of more than one form of time and its layered representation indicates some awareness that different segments of a society may view their past differently. For the legitimation to be acceptable it had to be beyond question. Here the claims of linear time were easier to manipulate.

There is yet another aspect of time, which I can only mention in passing, namely the relationship between time, memory and history, restricted to the context of linear time. To locate events in the first three cycles of the *mahāyuga* that cannot come under human control, is virtually to declare them as being outside history. What is projected as remembered is taken for granted with little effort to place it in the context of what may have been forgotten. History is viewed as a process of reaching into memory and also of retrieving the forgotten. This has political and social dimensions and can be used as an infrastructure for ideology, even of earlier times. The manipulation of genealogies may not be an act of memory but becomes such an act through the historian selecting what is to be included and what discarded from the past, what the historian chooses to remember or prefers to forget. A retrieval can also involve the need to draw on multiple readings of an event over many centuries, gathered from a variety of sources.

Comparative studies of variant versions and attempts to place these in their historical contexts is one way of trying to ascertain what has been chosen and what has been forgotten or discarded. In comparing variant versions of the same narrative written in different times, the historian has to consider what was suppressed and what was recalled in the narrative changing from one version to another; and equally importantly, why was this done. If the changing historical context was a factor, then the link between time, history and memory becomes an explanation.

This also raises a parallel concern relating to historical events as distinct from a fictional narrative. A historical narrative requires at least a minimum reflection on how memory is constructed in the period between the event and the historical interpretation of the event whenever that happened. This is difficult to do for early periods when the range of sources used in the construction of histories is not easily available. But possibly some creative extrapolation back would be helpful. Such an exercise becomes necessary, given the pretence of using memory in inventing historical traditions. The proneness to this characteristic of all societies, but more so with those that have a complex past demonstrated in their multiple cultures. The reconstruction of memory is also specific to histories and cultures as has been demonstrated by Frances Yates.

Memory also has the ability to compress or expand time reducing the accuracy of its time-reckoning. In looking back on the past there is a distinction between time as recent and time as an expression of temporal distance. Cyclic time can impinge on linear time when the significance of events is negated by saying that they are happening in the Kaliyuga, and since the Kaliyuga is an age of decline and distopia there is little point in marking historical events. Such markings are of course available in sources conditioned by linear time. Where events are contemporary with the text, memory or even the play on memory, would be of consequence. Time links events and the causal connections have to be explored.

It has been said that history overcomes time and memory. But before it can do that history has to investigate the making and marking of time in its social and historical dimensions.

Note

* Published in A. Maliner, ed., *Time in India: Concepts and Practices*, Delhi 2007, 23–38. Copyright © 2007. used with permission.

Romila Thapar *in Conversation with* Rajan Gurukkal

Rajan Gurukkal (RG): *Let me start with a general feature of your studies, particularly the methodology part, which has inspired me a lot. I have a feeling that it could be equally inspiring to any researcher, for that matter, if you as the author talk about it autobiographically, focusing on how a topic occurs to you and what factors guide you in your preparatory reading in theory, in the methodological selection, and the subsequent exposition. Your topics are mostly problem-specific and hence invariably explanatory. Is it because you insist that an enquiry should always emanate from a problem and that its outcome should be an explanation?*

Romila Thapar (RT): No, I wouldn't say that. I would say that an enquiry should begin with a question. Questioning is important. I remember a conversation that I had with Sundar Sarukkai, who said that before you can postulate a question you have to have a doubt, which is of course a philosophical way of approaching it. I agree that you may begin with a doubt and that doubt can be tied into a question. The question may be something quite simple, the answer to which will further qualify what you are saying. Or it may be a question that gives you the possibility of looking at the event or the person in history from different points of view. And that one question then leads to other questions that reflect these different points of view. So I would say that the fundamental approach to any piece of research or what one is working on grows out of a question.

RG: *In your writings, the initial condition is a priori reasoning. Theoretical understanding of the topic and critical appreciation of extant historiographical arguments seem to lead you to your question. The main question, as you said, leads to several subsidiary questions, which in their turn enable you to develop new knowledge. It is a two-way process—one relating to the understanding of theoretical works and the other relating to your articulation. Theoretical works are not often empirically relevant to your topic but they enable you to answer your questions beyond the extant historiographical understanding. You then seem to carry forward your answers along the hypothetico-deductive track till the point of articulation, by carefully checking them against the source material. You never accept any theory as such or as a whole in any of your studies. Be it the theory of Karl Polanyi or of Vladimir Propp or Marcel Mauss, you seem to take out of them only certain elements that apply to the situation that you analyse. You insist ultimately to come to terms with the historical context of your topic and its source material. In the process, sometimes you even modify the theory as the historical context and source material would require. How do you go about mapping your procedure?*

RT: I think that together with the initial question, there is always the related question of what are the sources, because the question that you ask cannot be a question for which there are no sources. Asking a question is partly influenced by the kinds of sources that are available, but only partly so and only initially, and which is why I see it as a kind of two-step start. One is that you know what sources you will consult to begin with, or some of them at least, and you pose your question in terms of the known sources, and this directs you to the kind of question you can ask. You ask the question, you get a few answers and hopefully these lead to more questions. You then proceed to the second step which is that in order to answer these additional questions, you search for other kinds of sources that you may require. Then you come to the important question of looking for another set of sources from the ones that you know exist or that you have consulted. In other words, I would argue that a historian initially knows what some of the sources are, but in the course of investigating those sources may discover other sources that raise other questions. The juxtaposition of question and source takes on much importance.

RG: *A point that needs to be highlighted here is the fact that sources seldom make your evidence explicit. What I mean is that the type of evidence that you finally ferret out from the source material is not out there for anybody to recognize.*

RT: No, I don't think that any kind of theory or explanation that you arrive at is obvious to anybody or everybody. I mean every researcher hopefully brings out an explanation that is new to others and, therefore, the research is new and advances knowledge about a particular subject. The kinds of questions that one asks, the kinds of answers one tries to give from examining the sources, in all this one is aware all the time that one is seeking for an explanation that may not be obvious but has been overlooked or has not been looked at, or has not been sought. The explanation then becomes new.

RG: *What I have been trying to say is that most of your sources are not empirically given for anybody to be able to verify and go by them. Instead, they are sources conceptually recognized and theoretically constituted. The people who are not knowledgeable in the theory may not be able to understand them, until they learn from your explanation the logical connection between your premises and the conclusion. For example, let us take your essays such as 'The* Rāmāyaṇa*: Theme and Variation' or '*Dāna *and* Dakṣiṇa *as Forms of Exchange', or 'Economic Factors in the* Mahābhārata*'—they are totally non-conventional and conceptual. Their formulation is based on specialized textual knowledge on the one side and sound theoretical grasp on the other. Any person knowledgeable in the texts, say a conventional Sanskrit scholar, would not understand your conceptualization and the kind of questions that you ask with insights drawn from Karl Polanyi, Marcel Mauss, Vladimir Propp, and others. You have the concept of reciprocity, redistribution, household economy, the gift, or the peculiarity of the text's structure and composition. You look for indications or clues in the text and ferret out the evidence in a state of theoretical awareness. There it is actually conceptual recognition and theoretical production of evidence. Apparently the evidence is not out there in the source material unlike in the case of a conventional historical narrative that invokes what is explicit in the source as its evidence.*

RT: Here I would say that the distinction I make is the distinction of the change within the discipline of history. This occurs with Indian history from the 1960s onwards. Prior to that—and this is something that I keep on saying repeatedly—prior to that ancient or early Indian history was regarded as Indology and was to a large extent a narrative of what happened in the past. The narrative was constructed by gathering information from the sources and linking up what was found. Therefore, history was largely a narrative of what the sources were stating. I think the change that came in the 1960s was that early Indian history came to be treated as a social science. This shift to being a social science is what you are referring to, which is that you begin with a question or even a range of questions. It is not that questions were not asked earlier but the type of questions asked and the nature of the connections being examined were different. You have to be trained to ask questions by having some understanding of how early societies functioned. This becomes very important both in terms of looking at the sources, which describe how early societies function, and looking at theoretical works that also refer to how early societies have functioned, not necessarily only the societies you are researching but even others. This is where I think, for example, that in my case it was probably my interest in comparative history and in disciplines such as archaeology and social anthropology that played a part. I remember reading Gordon Childe and being very struck by the fact that he discusses the process of evolution of society, and then later reading a critique of this idea. All this does raise a range of questions in one's mind. Some reading of earlier nineteenth-century social theorists, such as Marx and Engels to mention the obvious ones, was also helpful in suggesting questions and approaches that could be tried. Later, one read critiques of these approaches. Social scientists discussed theories of explanation in order to describe how societies functioned in the past. This was a relatively new area of interest although this was not the first time that a few of these questions were asked.

You mentioned *dāna* and *dakṣiṇā* and this is an example I often quote, because the book that got me thinking about this was the one published on the idea much earlier; it was Marcel Mauss writing on gift exchange. When I was writing my thesis on Aśoka, for example, gift exchange was meaningless to me. I didn't know what it meant. It was only later when I started reading some of this [Mauss's] work that I began to see that there are different ways of looking at this activity, and gift exchange is an interesting example. The *Ṛg Veda* has the well-known verses and hymns known as the *dāna-stutis*. The chief goes out on a successful raid and returns with substantial booty. The poet composes an eulogy, a *praśasti* to the chief, and the chief rewards the poet. A poet may claim that he received 10,000 head of horses and 50,000 head of cattle, and gold, and *dāsīs* as a gift from the chief. This is exaggeration because that economy couldn't have sustained such a gift. Nevertheless, he must have received something as a gift, as a kind of fee. The interesting point made by Mauss and by others is that this is an exchange. If the chief is giving tangible gifts to the poet, what is the poet giving to the chief? He is giving the chief an intangible gift—which is that of status. Some of the poets composing the *dāna-stutis* state in their poems that they are bestowing immortality on the chief by praising him in a hymn. This is so because we today know about these chiefs only because of these hymns/poems. This is a simple act in which a fee is being paid to somebody who is writing a poem in praise of his patron, which praise confirms the status of the patron, and such acts in various ways are present all through society, in every age.

Even to this day one sees various forms of this exchange. Then one has to ask what is the nature of the status that is being bestowed and it becomes important to know this. What is the poet doing with the material wealth that he has received? Is he in fact using it productively or is he just living on it? What is it that gives respectability and publicity to the chief who has made this gift? One begins to ask a series of questions as Marcel Mauss himself does when he discusses the *Śānti Parva* and the *Anuśāsana Parva* of the *Mahābhārata*. He discusses gift exchange in that context. So what struck me then was that here was a simple act that has not been commented on because the meaning of the act has not been questioned at length. But it is providing a clue to the society, and the clue is that the patron is the chief, whose status is endorsed by two kinds of people. One is the priest who actually celebrates his status and anoints him as chief, and the other is the poet who sings his praises and continues to emphasize his status. One is already beginning to get a little understanding of that society, which is very different from simply saying that these were hymns that were written by poets in praise of the chief and stopping there. This is what I mean when I say that it was from the 1960s onwards when one started reading this literature on how earlier kinds of societies functioned, that one began asking different questions. If you ask similar questions of your sources, do you get new answers? Let me add that the idea is not merely to read about other societies. The reading has to help formulate new questions so there is always the sense of comparative thinking at the back of one's mind. A fine example of such interdisciplinary work is that of Bruce Lincoln on cattle keepers in various contexts. He read Evans-Pritchard on the Nuer cattle keepers in East Africa. He had new questions to ask of the data from the *Avesta* in Iran and the *Ṛg Veda*, both of which were from cattle-keeping societies, apart from other similarities. They were agro-pastoralist cattle keepers. He notes the questions asked in the first case and sees whether such questions can be put to the data in the other two cases and also whether such questions can be asked at all. There is also the issue of the legitimacy of the question you are asking. Can you ask that question, are the sources going to give you an answer?

RG: *What is important here is the introduction of a methodology that was not that common. Generally historians have been going by what is apparent in the source material and then they linguistically explain what it means. Instead, you have been asking the question 'how does it work?' 'What it means' would normally end up with a description of things ...*

RT: Yet, if I may interrupt, what it means is also important. For example, the term 'pur' that is used in the *Ṛg Veda*, was taken to mean the same as *pura* in later texts, that is, a town or a city. But one Vedic scholar investigated the word and explained that it refers to a stockade and not to a city. That gives a different idea of the society, indicating that they could not be city dwellers if their settlement was a stockade.

RG: *This is what scientists generally do. Certainly as you said they first understand the elements very well and if elements constitute a phenomenon, then their question is how does the phenomenon work. Until they understand the* techne *part of it, the very making of the phenomenon and the underlying principles, they would not consider their project complete. Your method is the same. It is there in Kosambi ... maybe in several others, but largely not followed by many in historiography. The main reason perhaps is that they describe what is denoted in the source material. Your methodological preoccupation enables you to pursue the connotation that is not identified generally. You have the advantage of acquaintance with social science* *methodology, theoretical formulations in cognate disciplines of history. You draw insights from S. Freud, C.G. Yung, K. Karenyi, E. Cassirer, Mircea Eliade, A. Lang, and C. Levi-Strauss. It helps you move from history to social sciences. In several studies you move to anthropology or economic anthropology and back to history. What anthropologists ask of their synchronic objects of study seems to be sometimes relevant and meaningful to you in the context of your diachronic objects. Some of your interpretations show the influence of the generalizations made by certain theoretical anthropologists in their studies of tribes that exist today. You are able to understand the connotations of the indicators in the historical source at the instance of such anthropological interpretations. The knowledge that you have generated is strikingly fresh because none of the conventional historians was able to reach out to this distinct methodology ...*

RT: Some historians in the past may not have reached out but there are others who have done so and are debating the generalizations made about the society of those times. But let me give you two reactions. One is that I wasn't consciously using a scientific method. It was not as if anyone had told me what the scientific method was and I was saying 'now I'm going to apply this'. It comes out of a rational way of thinking. That you know you have evidence. What do you do with the evidence? Do you just note it or do you ask it questions. The big difference between what we do in the social sciences and the sciences is, of course, the obvious one that we cannot demonstrate a situation from the past. In some sciences there can be a demonstration of the evidence that one is working on. In historical research this happens up to a point with archaeology. Some have tried to suggest that there might be a parallel in some living prehistory, as Kosambi called it. These are societies of hunter-gatherers and agro-pastoralists, unfamiliar with urban settlements or literacy or the kind of governance and codes that go with that. We can compare them to descriptions in a text. But the sense of demonstration as used in scientific experiments is absent. The other factor that I think is important and is again different, even if one is depending on a rational basis for the questions, is that the historian is trying to understand a process of change, because history is about change. If you are studying clan society, for example, it is different in 600 BC from what it is like in 600 AD. It has changed. The historian has to be continually aware of the fact that whatever term he/she is using, whether it is *varṇa*, *jāti*, or *jana*, whatever it may be, that it has undergone change. That element of change has significance.

RG: *Do you find the same thing applicable in the case of archaeological data as well? At least in the case of texts we have a self-descriptive context. But in the case of archaeological relics, they are just relics. How do you make them speak?*

RT: There the archaeologist has to interpret the relics. I have occasionally come across archaeologists who maintain that archaeology speaks for itself, to which I have always replied by insisting that it does not speak for itself except in a simplistic way and that the evidence has to be interpreted. There are many debates on such interpretations. The archaeologist interprets the artefact. It is not the artefact that is talking. The artefact has to be interpreted. But in a sense and up to a point the same applies to the written text, because one is drawing out an abstract idea from a text when reading it. The text may tell one much more than a potshard. But in both cases, it is important to remember that ultimately there is a person who is also reading the evidence. That reading is the basis of the historical argument. One has to constantly ask oneself as to who is doing the reading and what is the perspective from which that object or that text is being read.

RG: *Although archaeologists know that it is important to talk about who used these artefacts, generally we do not find them going into the context of the actual use and the users or people behind. For example, an archaeologist knows that relics of Northern Black Polished Ware [NBPW] are relatively rare whereas those of coarse ware are in plenty. Their discussion is normally confined to the stratified context of the relics, their physical details, and the ceramic technology. It is obvious that one is aristocratic tableware and the other the most ordinary ware, perhaps used by the artisans and other servile groups like the* bhṛitakas, dāsas, *and* dāsīs. *But archaeologists would not talk about the people behind the artefacts and their social context. You know, the more they go scientific about the relics, the more they remain distanced from the actual conditions of human existence.*

RT: I think that depends very much on the training that archaeologists are given. In the sense that one of the most interesting changes that has taken place in archaeology is that archaeologists are realizing that their job is not simply to discover artefacts, list them, and provide their typology. If you look at the reports of the 1950s and 60s, still under the influence of Mortimer Wheeler, the focus of many reports of lesser excavations was on the strata from which the object was found, the object, the typology of the object, the number of such objects that were found, the other objects in its vicinity, and that kind of information. This of course is necessary as a start but then the study should move on to other aspects. But a change comes about in the 1980s where New Archaeology and Processual Archaeology and various other ways of thinking about archaeological evidence introduced new questions relating to the use and function of objects and information about the society from which they come. These become central questions in many excavations in various parts of the world. Unfortunately in India there is still not a large number of archaeologists who ask these questions. The majority are still limiting themselves to discovering artefacts and giving a typology of the artefacts and leaving it at that. But you are quite right that the question that needs to be asked is what is the function of this object, who is performing that function, and what does it say about the person who is performing that function? How does our information about people using Northern Black Polished Ware as against Painted Grey Ware change when we ask such questions? That kind of questioning hasn't yet become extensive in Indian archaeology, although it is familiar in some centres.

RG: *Do you think that it is because they have no orientation to social history?*

RT: I think so. Many archaeologists, for example, in the 1950s and the 60s had studied Sanskrit at university and this was extremely useful for studying inscriptions. Or they had qualified in a broad general course in history and ancient history. The orientation towards this specificity of archaeology and what it can tell you about a society was really not something that was taught. Even to this day we have archaeologists who specialize in the remains of animals and plants, all of which is important. But how much of their research is integrated into the study of the society settled in the site is another matter. Listing what and where these plants or these animal bones were found is required but there is less study of how we derive information from these data about the society. I find it interesting that, for instance, the report on the excavation at Hastinapur, and specifically the area where there was a cooking hearth, mentions the many animal bones with cut marks as evidence of their being cooked. Among them there is evidence of cattle bones. The obvious question then is one of nutrition. But not much is said about nutrition from a site such as Hastinapur. It is not discussed for a variety of reasons.

But I think you are right. It is because of the absence of knowledge about social history. Social history is not just the old-fashioned social history of repeating what is said about the four *varṇas* in the *Dharmaśāstras*. Social history does mean asking incisive questions about the relationships between social groups, whether it be kinship, family, community, *jāti*, and *varṇa*—all these social relationships are important.

RG: *Your essay 'Death and the Hero' deals with the socio-cultural implications of death. We have a commendable body of archaeological material in the form of burial relics, burial monuments, and hero-stones. Archaeologists have provided details of the stratigraphy, typology, and distribution, but not much about the socio-cultural contexts. On the contrary you raise all that in the article. It helps a researcher to go beyond the stratigraphy, typology, and distribution in search of the meanings of the monument. Did you have any specific study in mind, which theorized death and the hero?*

RT: No, not really except that I read this paper more or less in its present form at a conference in London which was on the celebration of the hero in societies in different parts of the world. There was a fair amount on the epics and heroic societies and a fair amount on archaeology where some of these questions were raised. But looking at these images and seeing them as different, two things struck me. One was that there was a cult of the hero that became more and more sophisticated as it went on. Because in the same general geographical area there were what seemed to be early figures of heroes—a man standing with a sword in the stance of a hero and either he had a horse nearby or he didn't have a horse. It was recognizable as a hero-stone, a stone commemorating a hero. This gradually changed to a cult of the hero as is evident, for example, from the hero-stones in the Maharashtra–Karnataka region. In these stellae-like slabs there are panels. The topmost have the sun and the moon as symbols of immortality and usually a symbol of the sect to which the hero belonged. Then the hero is shown being taken to heaven by the *apsarā*s and beneath that the event of his death is depicted. It's either a battle or it's a cattle raid in which the hero was taking part. Sometimes an inscription below these scenes explains where and when it happened and who the hero was. Even if there is no inscription the message is clear: that there was a cult of the hero that gave him immortality irrespective of his religious sectarian identity. Immortality takes the hero to heaven. So there was a belief in heaven. This was not just rebirth but an actual place to which he was being taken. Thirdly, it tells us that cattle raids and battles were common. I then started tracking the regions where there is more evidence of this cult and these turn out to be frontier regions, where there was some little uncertainty as to who was governing the area. Was the hero then a kind of a local guardian of the village? Is this a reflection on the administration that was well established in central regions but less so in the villages on the borders? The village would look after itself. So the village does defend itself and its cattle and creates the cult of the hero who is the protector of the village. This kind of reasoning in trying to understand what these images meant seemed to me to make sense.

RG: *I purposely asked very general questions without any particular study in mind because I wanted the discussion to be centred on your methodology. Such a discussion would benefit researchers constrained to be using the source material mechanically as an alienated exercise. I believe that they get exposed to ways and means of studying history as an intellectually challenging discipline. They get to know how to go beyond what is apparent in the source material. My expectation is that a discussion of your methodology will help such researchers reposition themselves with methodological preoccupation. It will inspire them to draw intimate with the source material and sustain curiosity to know what is underlying and significant about it.*

RT: Curiosity—hat is the main thing. One has to be curious in order to ask questions. That is central to how one thinks. For example, my interest in hero-stones really began when those who were organizing the seminar in London asked whether there was a hero cult in India. I had an idea that we did have such cults but I had not thought about the subject. I was asked if I would do a paper on it. That forced me to think seriously about the subject. I started reading up on hero cults and then decided to investigate some of the hero-stones. The hero-stones, of course, in some places are closely associated with sati-stones. Again a particular cult develops and it becomes necessary to explain not just the imagery but why the woman who became a sati was commemorated. What do these images and their context tell us about society?

RG: *Your use of the text is distinct for its thoroughness. You have seen texts in their multiple forms—the oral texts turned into the written, the texts rewritten from time to time with additions and interpolations, the linguistically stratified text, the analytically accessed subtext of the text and its intertextuality—in order to understand them in their historical context. You consult the specialized studies that matter for the purpose. For example, when you study oral poetry, theoretical works of Ruth Finnegan, Vladimir Propp, and Camile Bulcke are consulted. When you use a text as source material, be it for writing social history or history of ideas, the text itself becomes the initial object of analysis and you look for theoretical studies about the constitution and structure of the text. Do you think that here also your methodology is helped by anthropology or sociology?*

RT: In what ways? In what terms?

RG: *I mean in the ways of understanding the history of society in terms of functions and in the ways of understanding development of ideas in terms of their structure.*

RT: That I think really arose not so much from what I read of anthropology but in two other ways as well. One was the notion of the link between social and economic activities and ideas—that is obvious enough. It was given further elaboration in the writing of D.D. Kosambi who was addressing the Marxist theory of base and superstructure. One starts by examining an event and the activity of people involved with it and its representation in a text or in a visual form. One asks what is the context of the text? Here the discussion of the broader context of the society that may have given rise to or encouraged certain ideas, becomes relevant. Initially this was sufficient but from the 1960s discussions about text and context became frequent in the social sciences wherever they were applicable. Text and context began to be seen in diverse ways that sometimes differed from the Marxist. The basic question was how does one understand the different aspects of a text. I remember once when I was working on the *Mahāvaṃsa* of Sri Lanka with reference to Aśoka and the Mauryan period, I was discussing it with the historian Leslie Gunawardena, who was very knowledgeable about the text. In the course of our conversation he said that one has to be more suspicious of every text than we historians tend to be. When I asked him what he meant, he said that one must ask it questions, ask how one can define it and the degree to which one can accept the claim of the text to its veracity. I understood it by asking a series of questions such as, what is the text about, the barefaced text? Who is the author? What do we know about the author? What is the intention of the text? And it can have multiple intentions, all of which have to be examined. Who is the audience? What is the purpose ultimately in this text being put together and being taken forward generation after generation? For the generation for which the text is written it has a particular meaning. What meaning does it have for later generations? Now once you start questioning a text in this manner, you are really interrogating it. I think that that is fundamentally important in assessing any written source that one uses. What is said cannot be taken for granted until one has checked the reliability, the veracity of what is being said by asking these and other questions. In other words, the text is in the dock and one has to examine it in detail. The better you know that literature, the better your examination can be. One may come across a text about which one does not know very much, in which case the examination will be rather superficial. But if it is a text that belongs to a tradition that one knows, the examination becomes much more intense.

RG: *I think you started actually with the theoretical studies of the oral text by Ruth Finnegan and Vladimir Propp for examining traces of techniques of the oral composition in the corpus of certain written texts.*

RT: This was in connection with the epic. When I was working on the *Mahābhārata*, I tended to agree with those who argued that originally there had been an oral text, as indeed this might have been so with the earliest versions of the *Rāmāyaṇa* story. Many scholars have said that. I assumed that the kind of society that produces heroic literature as we know it from other examples in history right up till today, heroic literature draws on an oral tradition. Then I started reading about the oral tradition. But I was not essentially interested in the oral tradition because one can never get back to what might have been part of the oral tradition in the ancient period. It remains a trifle speculative for those early times. It can, however, be used from the medieval period onwards, in the last five hundred years. Nevertheless, I was interested in the work that had been done on the existing oral tradition in different parts of the country. I also read a little on the existing oral tradition that acquaints one about stereotypes, such as descriptive stereotypes frequently repeated—'bull of the Bharatas' or 'tiger among men'. These became formulaic and can be used for completing a metre for purposes of prosody. Or it provides an image of the event or person. Why is there a particular kind of an event that is repeated not necessarily in the same text but in other texts? For example, I was talking to a historian who is working on late medieval drama. She was asking why some plays, starting from Kālidāsa, repeatedly use the idea of the king losing his memory about the woman whom he is passionately involved with. Why is this particular idiom repeated in the literature? It obviously has a meaning other than just being of interest to the story. And so one starts searching for a meaning.

RG: *So the people who think that they can easily historicize the* Rāmāyaṇa *or the* Mahābhārata, *don't think about the* ...

RT: They don't think about these texts. The tragedy is that they not only don't think about these texts but they are limited to conventional ideas about the texts and don't wish to probe further. These texts are extremely complicated in what they represent. They are not simple texts. One cannot assume that whatever is referred to actually happened, or accept a date that is given without checking the evidence. As historians we have to ask many more questions.

RG: *And particularly when the techniques of composition themselves require recurrences, regularities, uniformities, repetitions, and, as you said, gap-filling stock expressions, how do we historicize them? Will it not end up as meaningless paraphrasing?*

RT: Absolutely.

RG: *The people without knowing the theoretical literature concerned run into trouble by getting lost in factoids and mythologized history. There is literature that embodies the specialized analysis of particular oral compositions leading to general theorization, as we discussed earlier. There is literature embodying the general theory of oral tradition as well, for example, the study by Jean Vansina. You have consulted both. As you know the purpose of the first type of analyses is different. For example, Vladimir Propp who made a specialized study of Russian fairy tales aimed at understanding them in their entirety. It took him into the structure, constituents, their positions, function and sequence, etc. and enabled a comprehensive theorization about the morphology of the folktale. He was not considering oral tradition as his object of analysis.*

RT: I think the reason for that is really that at the time when he was writing, oral history was not taken seriously as history. In fact it was often dismissed and the only kind of history that was taken seriously was history based on texts. I think the change came with the writing of the history of Africa where written texts were sparse but there was a strong oral tradition about the past. A methodology was developed on how to tackle the oral tradition and how to try and understand methods of finding out whether a statement is reliable or not in an oral tradition. This is a complex methodology that I am not familiar with as I have not specialized in studying it. It could be very effectively used as is being done with epic literature in different parts of the world. That in a sense gave respectability to the idea that the beginnings of a text may have been in an oral tradition, which then in certain circumstances came to be written. Then one has to ask the question as to why did it have to be written? Once it is written then there is the question of continuity in history. It was earlier maintained that an oral tradition is less reliable because it can be added to or changed, whereas the written tradition is permanent. It can't be added to. But what of a text such as the *Mahābhārata*, for example, that had interpolations both small and big, which give it a richness that makes it unique among epics. The range of subjects introduced into the text through these interpolations is almost incredible. Some segments among these can be dated. For example, H.D. Sankalia argued that the signet ring was introduced to India by the Indo-Greeks, therefore references to signet rings in these texts would be dated to that period and after. To maintain that such a text has a single specific date is virtually a non-historical statement.

Index

ācāryaparamparā, 60
adharma, 137
āditya-vaṃśa, 195, 197
Adityayaśa, 61
Agni, 24, 82, 103, 141, 210
agnihotra sacrifice, 29, 100
Agnikula lineage, 218, 233n103
agniṣṭoma sacrifice, 26, 29
agrarian economy, 5, 13, 24, 27, 43, 192, 208, 217–18
agrarian settlements, 208, 215
agricultural economy, 41, 59, 208, 260
ahiṃsā, 26
Aila lineage, 6, 74, 158
aindra mahābhiṣeka, 66
Aitareya Brāhmaṇa, 207
akāśamārgi, 62
ākhyānas, 1, 48
Alexander of Macedon, 197, 241, 245, 275
Alexandria, 237, 247, 259–60, 264, 268, 275, 277, 279–80
Ālhākhaṇḍa (epic poem), 190
Amarakoṣa, 219, 231n79
Āndhras, 57, 113, 131, 211, 214, 218
anuloma (hypergamy), 207
Anuśāsana-parvan, 13, 18, 29, 41, 43
apsarā, 62, 101, 161, 314
Aramaic language, 241–2
Araṇyaka-parvan, 1
Arjuna Kārtavīrya, 67; imprisonment of Rāvaṇa of Laṅkā, 67; killing of, 67
Arthaśāstra, 119
Āryabhaṭṭa, 292
ārya-varṇa, 38, 119, 204
ārya-varta, 119, 208, 240; incursions of *mleccha* rulers into, 216
Aśoka, Emperor, 173, 316; edicts in Greek and Aramaic, 242; Major Rock Edicts at Kandahar, 241
astronomy: Babylonian, 135; Hellenistic, 101; Indian, 101, 135; knowledge of, 291; lunar calendar, 101; luni-solar calendar, 135; *nakṣatras* (asterisms), 135; political importance of, 297; Purāṇic cosmology, 135; revolution of heavenly bodies, notion of, 135; Saptarṣi (Great Bear) constellation, 135; sexagesimal system, 135; solar calendar, 101; time cycles (see *time cycles*)
aśvamedha sacrifice, 26, 29, 37, 219
Atharvaveda, 207; compilation of, 141
avatāra of Viṣṇu, 48, 200; Kalkin, 214, 244–5, 294–6; *Matsya-avatāra* (fish incarnation), 121, 156–7, 159, 296;

Paraśurāma, 142, 161, 196; Rāma, 48, 55, 195; theory of, 59, 64; *varāha* (boar) incarnation, 115, 122

Avesta (Iran), 309

bali (tribute), 10, 23

barbarian, in early India: Ānava tribes, 208; Āndhras, 214, 218; concept of, 202; Huns (Hūṇas) of Central Asia, 216–17; identification of, 202; Kol tribes, 216; *mleccha* (see *mlecchas*); Niṣāda, 214–15; Pulinda and Śabara, 215–16

barter system, 19, 262, 265

Bhāgavata Purāṇa, 193

Bhāgvatism, 68, 87; cult of, 59, 242

bhakti movement, of devotional religion, 81, 87

Bhāratavarṣa, 116–17, 239

Bhṛgu-aṅgirasas, 141

bhṛtya, 28

Black-and-Red Ware culture, 128

Bodhi dynasty, 64

bodhisattva ideal, 54, 59

Brahmaloka, 100

brāhmaṇas, 22, 26, 37, 52, 63, 85, 115, 120, 139, 192, 197, 296; Ābhīra, 224; Alexander's hostility towards, 241, 245; Āmbaṣṭha, 224; bardic tradition of, 119; becoming kings, 139; Bhṛgu (Bhārgava), 140, 142; feeding of, at the time of the *śrāddha*, 83; food as *dāna*, 43; food eaten by, 221; freedom from rebirth, 105; gifts to, 11, 14, 28; granting of land and villages to, 44, 200, 217; hostilities with Yavanas, 245, 275; hostility with *kṣatriya*, 142; Maga, 224; of *prasarpaka* category, 40; as professional priests, 28; royal patronage, 104; social rules promulgated by, 245; status compared to *śūdra*, 55; status through fraud, 63; superiority of, 11; Vedic Brahmanism, legitimacy of, 140; work and teaching of, 98

brāhmaṇa varṇa, 224

Brahmanism, 104, 140, 222–4, 223, 249, 274, 291

bride-price, 127, 185

Buddhism, 68–9, 145, 155, 242, 249, 273–5; competition with Bhagavata religion, 145

Buddhist Order (the Saṅgha), 69, 144, 175, 246

cakravartin, 116

Candella dynasty, 182, 188; origin myth of, 188

Caṇḍi, Goddess, 224

Candragupta II, succession of, 178n69

Candravaṃśa lineage, 6–7, 102, 124, 126, 130, 156, 184, 218, 296; geography and migration of, 127

caravan trade, of southern Arabia, 259

caste-based societies, 180, 238; categories of, 115

cattle raids, 3, 12, 37, 81, 83, 100, 105, 128

cāturyuga of four cycles, 134, 135

Ceylon Chronicles, 56, 144, 247

Chamba: *vaṃśāvalī*, 193–4, 197, 198; clans and families, 198; copper mine, discovery of, 200; Guhila tradition, 197–8; identification of Mūṣaka with Musicanus, 197; Jogi sect, 198; kingdom of, 193; Kishkindha, 198; Lakṣmī-Nārāyaṇa temple, 199; memorial stones, 194; myth of origin, 195; post-Gupta period, 197; royal family, 200; royal inscriptions, 195; ruling ancestry of, 194;

Sūryavaṃśa lineage, 194; story of the founder of the family, 195; Vaiṣṇavism, 199
clan-based societies, 17, 180, 182, 186, 191, 274
coins: circulation of, 265; defacing of, 273; gold coins, 249, 269, 273, 278; high value, 270, 273; hoarded against brigandage, 269; Indo-Greek, 242; Kṣatrapa silver currency, 265; minting of, 269; Nero's debasement of, 273; paid as protection money, 269; punch marks, 273; Roman, 249, 265, 268, 277; Sātavāhana coinage, 266; silver, 249, 269, 273
Copper Hoards, 4, 210
cross-cousin marriage, 9, 169; in Buddhist tradition, 169; legitimacy of, 169; related to lineages, 170

dakṣiṇā (sacrificial fee), 34, 36, 39; associated with royal rituals, 39; concept of, 41; nature of, 40
Dakṣiṇa Kosala, 57
dāna (giving of gifts), 11, 13, 18, 34; acceptance of animals as, 39–40; amount of, 29; appropriateness of, 33, 38; best form of, 30; Buddhist notion of, 42, 54; and chain of rebirth, 42; concept of, 33, 38; custom of, 33; earliest references to, 35; food as (*annadāna*), 43; highest form of, 43; *hiranyagarbha*, 44; institutionalizing of, 45; items of, 12, 20–1, 36, 39; justification for, 38; of kine or gold, 29; magico-religious function of, 37; *mahādānas*, 44; material content of, 28; as means of redistributing economic wealth, 37; pattern of, 28; *pṛthivīdāna* (gifting of land), 14, 30, 37, 43–4; purpose of, 35, 37; *pūrta-dāna*, 41; reciprocity with *puṇya*, 42; in Ṛgvedic age, 35, 43; and shift in the items gifted, 39; six-fold definition of, 41; of tanks and water, 29; *tulapuruṣa*, 29; of villages, 56; as wages, 28
dānastutis, 1, 36, 100, 140, 308
dāsa-varṇa, 204
dāsīs, 308
dātā (donor), 35
dead: and act of renunciation, 101; cremation of, 86, 90; customs regarding disposal of, 86; cycle of rebirth and reincarnation, 86; funeral rites, 100; and idea of pollution, 101; rites of passage of, 101; rituals for, 86
devayāna, 103, 104
Devīcandraguptam, 174
Devī Māhātmya, 224
Devāpi and Śantanu, story of, 125–6
dhamma, propagation of, 102, 241
dharma: concept of, 134, 137; decline of, 294; sacred and social obligations, 295
dharma-śāstra, 2, 11, 34, 116, 119, 185, 206–7, 218, 237, 240, 243, 291, 313; social norms of, 294
Dhenukākaṭa, 276
digvijayas, 123, 190
Dīpavaṃsa, 56
Durgā, goddess, 224
Dvaita-vana, 12, 25
dvīpa, notion of, 238

eka-chātram (sole monarchs), 131
Eliade, Mircea, 153, 289
Enki (Sumerian god), 157
epic literature: associated with Sanskritic culture, 47; on clan-based

society, 17; dating of, 6; epic society, depiction of, 13; exile, theme of, 24; heroic ages, 17; historical function of, 2; importance of agriculture in, 14; making of, 1; penance and purification, theme of, 24; political forms in, 9; purpose of, 2

epistrategos, 264, 278

fertility cults, 223, 235n133

five clans, confederacy of, 7–8

fraternal polyandry, 9, 127

frontier zones, of states, 89–90, 98

game of dice, 12, 20; importance of, 20

gaṇa-saṅgha system, 68, 168; of chiefships or oligarchies, 54; political functioning of, 10

Gandhara art, 242

Ganga–Yamuna *doāb*, 3, 128, 130, 162, 208, 216

Garden of Eden, 289

gāthās, 1

genealogies, patterns of, 109–10; in *Mahābhārata*, 110, 126; in *Purāṇas*, 110, 126

ghoṣa-yātrā (cattle expedition), 12, 25

gift-exchange, 3, 18, 269; barter system, 19; characteristic of societies, 18–19; as compensation for the donor, 43; currency of exchange, 43; levels of, 19; potlatch and, 20; process of, 38; ranking of giftbearers, 19; relevance of, 41; in *Vedas*, 34

Girivraja, city of, 23

Golden Age, 10, 115, 136–7, 168, 172, 294

Great Flood, story of, 120; Assyrian sources of, 122; Chaldean chronology of, 121; creation of man, 121; in Harappan times, 122; Indian version of, 122; Indo-European sources of, 122; in *Mahābhārata*, 121, 156; Manu, 120–1; in *Matsya Purāṇa*, 112, 113, 120, 156; in Mesopotamia, 122; myth of, 134, 156–7; in *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*, 121, 156, 159; seven sages, 121; Sumerian version of, 122, 157; *Varāha* (boar incarnation of Viṣṇu), 122

Guhilas of Mewar, 196, 219

Gupta dynasty, 57, 136, 298

Haihaya, dynasties of, 64

Harappan settlement, 4

Harṣacarita, 174, 189

Hastināpura, 5

Heliodorus (Greek ambassador from Taxila), 242

hero-stones, 102; commemorating the hero, 99; at Bedsa, Maharashtra, 93; *bhagat*, role of, 85, 95n3; cult of, 79, 98; cutting of selected stone, 82; from Damkhed, Gujarat, 93; and death, 90; differentiation with memorial, 86; distribution of, 98; earliest descriptions of, 82; evolution of, 87; form of, 80; frequency of, 88; as frontier zones, 89; function of, 88; funeral rites, 100; from Gatag-Batgeri, 92; from Holal, Karnataka, 92; inscriptions of, 81; *kīrti-stambha* (pillars of fame), 83; location of, 79–80, 105; megalithic association of, 80; memorials to wives, 83; from Molcamem, 91; moment of self-assertion for eternity, 87–8; *naḍukal* (planted stone), 82; notion of, 86; orb of the sun and the crescent moon, 101; origin of, 80; *pāliya*, 83; of persons with higher status, 80–1; of persons with lower status, 81; in Rajasthan, 83; rituals for setting up of, 83, 85, 90; sanctity of, 90; from Saurashtra, 83; setting up of, 83, 85, 90, 99; shape of, 80; in south India, 83; style of, 80; substratum cult of, 88; symbolism of the objects associated with, 82, 105; transformation of, into a deity, 87; in tribal and folk religion, 98; veneration of, 98; *vīra-kal (Vīra-k-kal)*, 82; worship of, 99; see also *satī*-stones

Hiḍimba-vana, 24

Hinduism, 86, 223; components of, 98; fertility cult, 223; mother-goddess cult, 224; Purāṇic, 191; Śaktī-Śākta cult, 224; snake cult, 223; Sontheimer's analysis of, 98

Huns (Hūṇas) of Central Asia: destruction of Roman empire, 216; image of, 217; impact of, 217; invasions of India, 216–17; official language of, 217; as patron of Hinduism, 223; Sun and Fire cults of, 223

Ikṣvāku lineage, 6, 51, 53, 102, 123, 130, 137, 156, 170, 184, 218; Adityayaśa, 61; myths connected with, 55

Iḷā (female half of Manu's child), 124, 137, 156

incestuous relationship, myths on, 157–8, 173

Indika (Megasthenes), 211

Indo-Aryan speech, 239

Indo-Greek coins, 242

Indra: demoting of, 55; as protector of the Bharatas and the Cedis, 55; *vajra* (thunderbolt), use of, 55

Indraloka, 100

Indraprastha, 3–5, 13

Indus civilization, 4–5, 203

Islam, rise of, 257

iṣṭi-pūrta, concept of, 39

itihāsas, of the Vedic corpus, 125

itihāsa-purāṇa tradition, 113, 138, 140, 153, 155, 174, 193, 199; myths and, 155–6

Jaina *munis*, 62–4

Jainas, 43

Jainism, 64–5, 68, 145, 210, 249

Jamadāgni, Rāma, 67

Jambudvīpa, 116–17, 156, 239

Janamejaya sacrifice, 1

janapada, 10, 12, 24, 131, 168, 213; of Cedi, 52; of Indo-Gangetic divide, 52; of Kosala, 51; of middle Ganga valley, 52; *uttarapatha*, 52

Jātaka literature, 48, 56; associated with the *Rāmāyaṇa*, 48–9; Cedi-Kalinga link indicated in, 52; *Cetiya Jātaka*, 52–3; *Dasaratha Jātaka*, 50; *Jayadissa Jātaka*, 53; *Mahājanaka Jātaka*, 49–50; *Nimi Jātaka*, 49; *Sāma Jātaka*, 49; *Sambula Jātaka*, 51; *Vessantara Jātaka*, 51–2, 61

Jyotiṣa-Vedāṅga texts, on astrology, 135; luni-solar cycle of, 135

Kailāśa, 100

Kālayavana (Black Greek), 244

Kālidāsa, 317

Kali-yuga, 130, 132, 134, 136–7, 212–14, 293, 297, 301, 303; as age of ethical and moral decline, 244; associated with degeneration, 293; calculation of, 293; coming of Kalkin and, 294; linear time within, 301; logic of events in, 294; number of years

in, 135; start of, 133, 295; symbols of decline, 293; transgression of caste norms in, 294
Kalkin, 244; concept of, 294; messianic coming of, 294–5
kalpa (largest time cycle), 291–2; Buddhist description of, 292; temporal length of, 292
Kauṭilya, 131
Khāṇḍavavana: burning of, 13, 24; protection by Indra, 24
kharoṣṭhī script, 242
Kirātārjunīya, 215, 231n83
Kirāta tribe, 239
kīrti-stambha (pillars of fame), 83; *Govardhana-kīrti-stambha*, 95n2
Kṛṣṇa Deva Raya, 216
kṛṣṇapakṣa (dark fortnight), 103, 291
Kṛṣṇa Vāsudeva, 7, 9–10, 28, 87, 89
Kṛta (Satya) *Yuga*, cycle of, 115, 134, 293
kṣatriya, 10, 37, 115, 131, 243; of *Bhāratavarṣa*, 120; connotation of, 53; death on battlefield, 100; *digvijayas*, 123; ethos of, 11, 123; extermination by Paraśurāma, 142, 196; gifting of land by, 30; hostility with *brāhmaṇa*, 142; kinship links among, 174; kṣatriyahood, 132; lineages of, 123; origin myths of, 50–1, 172; social customs of, 123; succession of, 131; *svayamvara*, 123; *varṇa* status of, 190; *vrātya kṣatriyas*, 243, 294
Kuṣāṇas, 212

Lakṣmaṣa temple, Khajurāho, 101
Lakṣmī-Nārāyaṇa temple, Chamba, 199; financial cost of building, 200
Licchavis, origin of, 166
lineages: Candravaṃśa lineage, 6–7, 102, 124, 126, 130, 156; difference in the structure of, 158; of Licchavis, 167; lineage-based societies, 10; purity of, 168; Sūryavaṃśa lineage (*see* Ikṣvāku lineage)
lingam (phallus), 81, 85, 223; worship of, 199
Liṅgāyatas, 223
lunar calendar, 101, 138, 291

madhya-deśa, 7, 162–3
Magadha, dynasties of, 131, 210
māgadha, origin of, 119, 155, 159
Mahābhārata, 1, 4, 15, 41, 52, 103, 111, 138, 161, 162, 183, 238, 291, 316; Ādiparvan, 17; Anuśāsana Parva, 308; Āraṇyakaparvan, 17; battle between the Kauravas and the Gandharvas, 12; Bhīṣmaparvan, 17; Candravaṃśa lineage, 126; cattle raids, 12; conflict between collateral cousins, 6–7; Dhṛtarāṣṭra, 8; diets during period of, 26; fraternal polyandry, 9; game of dice, 12, 20; genealogical construction in, 110, 126; *ghoṣa-yātrā* (cattle expedition), 12; Great Flood, story of, 121, 156; Kauravas, 8; Khāṇḍavavana, burning of, 13; Kṛṣṇa's role as the charioteer, 7; Manu Vaivasvata, story of, 113; marriage systems, 8–9; Pāṇḍavas victory, 7; purity and the sanctity of the forest, 24; Pūru line of succession, 8; *rājasūya* sacrifice, 19–20; Sabhāparvan, 17, 19, 100; *Śānti Parva*, 308; Skanda, birth of, 82; slaves referred to in, 27; Veda Vyāsa, 126
Mahānirvāṇa Tantra, 102
mahāparinirvāṇa, of Buddha, 299
mahāsammata, 172
Māhātmyas, 112

Mahāvaṃsa, 172, 316
Mahāvastu, 165
Mahāvihāra, monastery, 144, 173
mahāyugas, 115, 134, 135, 292, 294, 295; calculation of cycles of, 292; four cycles within, 295
Major Rock Edicts, at Kandahar, 241
Maṇimēkalai, 271
Manu Svyambhu: children of, 123–4; creation of, 117; female child of, 124; story of, 120–1, 156
Manu Vaivasvat, 117
manvantara cycles, 117, 134; calculation of, 292
marriage systems, 8–9; for controlling power in clan-based societies, 127; cross-cousin marriage, 9, 127, 169–70; and incestuous relationship, 157; kinship systems associated with, 9, 219; marriage by abduction, 127; sibling marriage, 53–4, 169, 170; *svayamvara*, 123
Matsya-avatāra (fish incarnation), 121, 156–7, 159, 296
matsyanyāya, concept of, 163
Matsya Purāṇa, 112, 113, 295; Devāpi and Śantanu, story of, 125–6; story of the Flood, 112, 113, 120, 156
Maurya, Candragupta, 65, 131
Maurya dynasty, 131, 241
Mauss, Marcel, 18, 34–5, 41
māyā (magic), notion of, 141
Megasthenes, 56, 111; *Indika* of, 211; on *mlecchas*, 211
Megha dynasty, 57
meghavāhana, 65
memorials of heroes, 79; *bhagat*, role of, 85, 95n3; and frontier zones, 89–90; geographical distribution of, 89; hero-stones (*see* hero-stones); *satī*-stones (*see satī*-stones); significance of, 85; subsidiary memorials, 85
Menander (Greek King), 246
milakkhu, 210–11
Milindapañha, 246
mlecchas, 62, 203, 239; Ānava tribes, 208; *bhāṣā* (language), 205, 239; connotation of impurity, 240; *deśa*, 205, 208–10, 212–13; *dharma*, 213; food (*mleccha-bhojana*) of, 221; incursions into *āryāvarta*, 216; *jātis*, 206; as patrons of Sanskrit learning and culture, 219; relation with *ārya*, 206; speech and culture of, 208; status and rights of, 222; tribe of the Deccan, 219
mokṣa-dharma, 2
monsoon winds, 247–8, 257, 260, 271, 279
mother-goddess cult, 161, 224
Mount Meru, 117, 238–9
mṛdhra vāc, 133, 204
Mūṣaka, 197, 198
Mūṣakavaṃśakāvya, 196, 197
Mūṣana-gotra, 195
myths: in Buddhist sources, 165; defined, 153; Eliade's view of, 153; of eternal return, 289; and folk-tale, 153; Great Flood, story of, 134, 156–7; of Ikṣvāku lineage, 55; on incestuous relationship, 157; Indo-European mythology, 153; interpretation of, 153; and *itihāsa-purāṇa* tradition, 155–6; Malinowski's view of, 153; myth-making, elements of, 152; of Niṣāda and Pṛthu, 215; notion of, 153; on origins of human society, 153; purpose of, 155; ritual origins of, 153; of Śākyas, 167; social underpinnings of, 153; of time cycles, 294; tripartite ideology, 153; of Yayāti, 161–2, 165

naḍukal, 82
nakṣatras (asterisms), 135
Nandas, 131, 144
nārāśaṃsīs, 1
neobrahmanism, 244
Nicakṣu, 4
Niśāda, 214–15
Northern Black Polished (NBP) Ware culture, 5, 311
Nuer cattle keepers (East Africa), 309

Ochre Colour Pottery, 4, 128
Okkāka lineage, 51

Padmacarita (Vimalasūri), 60
Painted Grey Ware (PGW), 4, 128; disposing the dead, 5; distribution of, 4
pañca-lakṣana, 111, 115
panca-vīras, concept of, 8, 87, 96n5
Pāṇini, 87, 204
Paraśurāma, 142, 161, 196; extermination of *kṣatriyas* by, 142, 196
pastoralism, 5, 17, 26, 43, 87, 89, 116, 127, 263
Patañjali, 204, 239
Paumacariyam (Vimalasūri), 48, 60, 62, 64–5, 69; *rākṣasas* of, 64
Periplus, 264, 270, 273–4
Persian Gulf, 259, 260
pitṛs, 86, 103
pitṛyāna, 103, 106
Pliny, 111, 263, 268, 270, 277, 279–80
plough agriculture, 24, 34, 59
polyandry, fraternal, 9, 127
Prākṛit language, 241
pratigrahītā (recipients), 35; definition of, 42
pratiloma, 119, 207
prāyaścitta, 18, 216
primogeniture, rule of, 7, 9, 58, 62, 125, 158, 161–4, 174, 184–5, 296
pṛthivīdāna (gifting of land), 14, 30, 43–4; *agrahāra*, 44; *agrahārika*, 44
Pṛthu Vainya, story of, 115–16, 119, 215
Ptolemy, 54, 215, 273–4
Pulinda and Śabara, story of, 215–16
Purāṇas, 43, 52, 56, 57, 67, 102, 111–12, 118, 124, 230n68, 238–9, 297; *Brahmāṇḍa*, 112, 115; chronology of, 134; compilation of, 112; composition of, 112; cosmology of, 135; on cross-cousin marriage, 169; on evolution of society, 157; genealogies in, 110, 118; *itihāsa-purāṇa*, 112; *Matsya*, 112, 113, 120; *pañca-lakṣana*, 111; *Sthala-Purāṇas*, 112; *Upa-Purāṇas*, 112; *vaṃśānucarita*, 55, 114; *Vāyu*, 112; *Viṣṇu*, 112–13, 115, 125

rājā, 118; succession of, 123, 184; *yona rājās*, 241
rāja-dharma, 2, 11, 195
rājasūya ceremony, 9, 11, 26, 28; distribution of wealth during, 12, 14, 19, 28; gift items, 12, 20–1, 36; link with game of dice, 20; performed by Yudhiṣṭhira, 11; rituals of, 19; shift in the items gifted, 39; Vaiṣṇava sacrifice and, 19
Rājataraṅgiṇī (Kalhaṇa), 199
rākṣasas: characterization of, 60; etymology of, 75n97; lineage of, 58, 60; as practitioners of *yātudhāna*, 75n97; of *Rāmāyaṇa* story, 65; of Vālmīki, 58, 66; wealth of, 59
Rāma-kathā, 48, 169, 171
Rāmāyaṇa, 6, 27, 111, 124, 163, 183, 317; area of exile, 57; *avatāra* of Viṣṇu, 48; Ayodhyā, kingdom of, 54; *Ayodhyākāṇḍa*, 49–50, 58; *Bāla-kāṇḍa*, 55, 56; battle between good and evil, 47; Bhārgava version of, 64; in Buddhist *Jātaka* literature,

48–50, 54; characterization of the *rākṣasa*, 60; Daṇḍaka forest, 56; Daṣaratha episode, 60; defeat of Rāvaṇa, 66; description of exile, 62; dethroning of Sītā, 55; on ethical behaviour in human relationships, 47; events included in, 48; exile of Rāma, 49; identification of Laṅkā with Sri Lanka, 76n105; Jaina version of, 48, 60; kidnapping of Sītā, 67; killing of Rāvaṇa, 55; location of Laṅkā, 56, 66; Mahanadi area, 66; medieval adaptation of, 216; monarchical state and chiefships, 59; order of descent in, 58; popularity and the function of, 47; for propagation of Vaisnavism, 48; *rākṣasa* society in, 58–9; *rākṣasas* of, 65; *rāma-kathā*, 48; Rāma's major exploits, 62; Rāvaṇa, description of, 62; religious and philosophical activities, 50; role of Rāma, 55; Sītā as a fertility goddess, 55; social and political life, features of, 124; Sūryavaṃśa lineage, 124; triumph of the monarchical state, 48; *Uttara-kāṇḍa*, 55; Vaiṣṇava *bhakti*, theme of, 59; by Vālmīki, 47, 48, 50, 54, 56, 59, 62, 68; versions of, 48

Rāvaṇa of Laṇkā: *akāśamārgi*, 62; imprisonment by Arjuna Kārtavīrya, 67; defeat of, 66; description of, 62; in Jaina literature, 62; killing of, 55; *puṣpavimāna* (aerial chariot), 62

renunciation, sectarian movements based on, 98

Ṛg Veda, 102, 208, 309; appeal for *dāna* in, 43; composition of, 38; *dāna-stuti* hymns, 35–7, 39, 100, 140, 308; on path which dead travel from this world to beyond, 103; references to agricultural activities, 37; on sibling incest, 158

ritual purity, rules of, 205, 221, 225, 246

rituals: for the dead, 86; for setting hero-stones, 83, 85, 90

Roman economy, 260, 261, 277–8

Roman imperial system, 258

Roman maritime trade, with India, 257–8; from Alexandria to Malacca, 259; in articles of feminine vanity and of luxury, 277; Barbaricon and Barygaza ports, 263–4; barter system, 262, 265; in beryl and semi-precious stones, 269; in black pepper, 268, 277; cash donations, 266; in Chinese silk, 273; circuits of exchange and trade, 259; commodity trade, 269; in consumables and food items, 260; and control over prestige goods, 270; demands of, 263; economic balance, 267; frontiers and zones of activity, 259; gift-exchange, 269; in grave furnishings, 268; Hellenistic kingdoms and, 259; imperial investment in, 261; import of wheat, 271; in ivory and textiles, 279; with Malabar coast, 268; mechanisms of exchange, 262; Megalithic exchange networks, 268; in metal artefacts, 268; monetary exchange, 265; monopoly over the Red Sea trade, 278; protection money, 269; Red Sea ports, 264; religious ideology associated with, 275; Roman *denarii*, import of, 265; Roman gold coins, 265; in semi-precious stones, 268; settlements of Yavana traders, 272; shipping, control of, 278; through Red Sea and Persian Gulf, 260; traders and ships crews, 263; in wine, 277; Yavana merchants, 267

Śaiva cult, 242
Śaiva Siddhāntas, 223
Śakas (Scythians), 212
Śaka satraps, inscriptions, 212
Śaktī-Śākta cult, 224
Śākyas, origin of, 167
Samudragupta (Gupta King), 213
Śaṅgam literature, 271
saṅgha, 10, 168
Sanskritization, process of, 219, 225
sapiṇḍa, 169
Saptaṛṣi (Great Ḅear) constellation, 135
sapta-sindhu, 208
Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa, 100, 103, 159, 161, 204; on creation of man, 122; story of the Flood, 120–1, 156, 159
satī-stones, 79, 83, 88, 102, 106; epigraphical references to, 85; frequency of, 85; inscription of, 84; in Jhunjhunu, Rajasthan, 84; from North Kerala, 94; *satī-kal*, 84
satīs (virtuous ones): in *Mahābhārata*, 84; memorial stones for (see *satī*-stones); purity and the condition of, 84; and ritual of self-immolation, 84; in *Śaṅgam* literature, 83; as suicide, 84; Vedic sacrificial ritual, 84
Saugandhika-vana, 24
Saviour Deity, idea of, 214
sexagesimal system, 135
sibling marriage: tabu on, 170; theme of, 53–4, 169
siddha, 198–9
Śilappadikāram (Tamil epics), 271–2
Skanda Purāṇas, 193
slaves, 12, 13, 22, 27; recruitment of, 28; as source of luxury, 37; use of, 28
smṛti literature, 33
snake cults, 223, 235n133
society: *ārya-varṇa*, 204; *dāsa-varṇa*, 204; division of, 204; notions of, 124
solar calendar, 101, 135, 138, 291
solstices: *dakṣināyaṇa* (winter solstice), 291; *uttarāyaṇa* (summer solstice), 291
somavatī amāvasya, 102
śrāddha, 26, 83, 88; calendrical period of, 86; ceremony, 205, 224; feeding of *brāhmaṇas*, 83; rewards for performing, 26, 29; rites of, 100; ritual period of, 82–3; for well-being of departed souls, 83; worship of ancestors, 83
substratum cult, 79, 88, 104, 169
śūdras, 115, 131, 214, 240, 297; *pūrta-dāna*, 41; *śūdra* labour, 27
śuklapakṣa, 103, 291
Sūryaloka, 100
Sūryavaṃśa lineage. *See* Ikṣvāku lineage
sūta (charioteer of the *rājā*), 118–19, 155, 159; origin of, 119
svayamvara, 123, 190, 191; significance of, 123

tantric cults, 102, 198
Tantricism, 198, 224
Tantric *siddhas*, 199
time cycles: concept of, 134, 157, 184, 289–90; construction of, 290; *kalpa* (largest cycle), 291–2; linear time, 290; luni-solar calendar, 291; markers of, 290; measurements of, 290; myths of, 294; systems of calculating, 292; *yuga* (see *yugas*)
tīrthaṅkaras, 63
tulapuruṣa, 44

Upaniṣads, 102, 103, 105
Uttarakuru, 168, 209

Vaiśampāyana, 1
Vaiṣṇava Bhāgavatism, 64

Vaiṣṇava cult, 242
Vaiṣṇavism, 155, 199, 200; beliefs and values, 59; propagation of, 59; Vaiṣṇava *bhakti*, theme of, 59; Vaiṣṇava sacrifice, 19, 23
Vālmīki *Rāmāyaṇa*, 68, 77n116
vaṃśam rājnyam, 123, 131
vaṃśānucarita, 111, 130, 136–7, 146, 155–6, 182, 295–6, 301
vaṃṣāvalīs, of Nepal, 167, 187–8
Vānara lineage, 60
Varāhamihira, 244
varṇas: creation of, 115, 158; law of, 212; notion of, 206
varṇa dharma, protectors of, 214
varṇasaṃkara, 142
varṇāśramadharma (ordering of society), 63, 142, 243
Vasiṣṭha, 142
Vedas, 115; on duties of king, 28; economic system of, 34; on gift-exchange, 34
Veda Vyāsa (Kṛṣṇa Dvaipāyana), 112, 126
Veṇa, King, 215
Vidyādharavaṃśa, 61
Vidyādhara lineage, 61, 63, 64
Vijaya, story of, 173
Vikramāditya VI (Cālukya king), 298
Vikramānkadevacarita, 174, 178n69
Vimalasūri, 48, 60, 65–6
Viṣṇu: *avatāra* of, 48, 59; *cakra* of, 116; and demoting of Indra, 55; rise of, 55
Viṣṇu Purāṇas, 112–13, 115, 125, 158, 160, 162, 183, 188, 289, 291, 295; on birth of Iḷā as the daughter of Manu, 156–7; Devāpi and Śantanu, 125–6; *itihāsas* of the Vedic corpus, 125; Kālayavana, 244
Viśvāmitra, 142
Viṭṭhobā, cult of, 87, 90
vrātya kṣatriyas, 170, 212, 213, 218, 226, 243, 294
Vṛṣṇis, 8

yajamānas, 36, 103
yajñas (Vedic sacrificial rituals), 29, 115, 116; comparison with battle, 100; *dakṣiṇā* of, 43; gift-exchange during, 38; kings performing, 129; *kuśa* grass used in, 116; performance of, 50
yātu-dhānas, 140
Yavanajātaka, 275
Yavanas, 239; acceptance of Buddhism, 276; barbarous language, 277; *brāhmaṇa* hostility to, 245, 275; Buddhist missions, 276; Buddhist view of, 245–6, 276; Cēra hostility towards, 277; depiction of, 244; Indian experience of, 250; integration with Indians, 276; Kālayavana (Black Greek), 244; maritime trade, 247; patronage of Buddhism, 246; social hierarchy of, 242; in Tamil Sangam literature, 248; traders, settlements of, 272
Yayāti, story of, 161–2, 165, 243
yona rājās, 241
yoni, 81
Yudhiṣṭhira, 7, 11, 12, 19, 20, 22, 27, 28, 29
Yugapurāṇa, 244
yugas, 290–1, 301; *Dvāpara Yuga*, 134; four cycles of, 134; framework of, 291; *Kali-yuga* (see *Kali-yuga*); *Kṛta* (Satya) *Yuga*, 115, 134, 293; length of, 134; *mahāyugas*, 134, 292; theory of, 134; *Treta Yuga*, 115, 134

035864

Narayan Rao
National Law

ROMILA THAPAR is Professor Emerita at Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, India. She has researched and written extensively on early Indian history and on the historiography of this period. She was one of the recipients of the John W. Kluge Prize for Achievement in the Study of Humanity in 2008. Her major works, among others, are *Aśoka and the Decline of the Mauryas* (1961), *Ancient Indian Social History: Some Interpretations* (1978), *From Lineage to State* (1984), *Cultural Pasts* (2000), *The Past Before Us: Historical Traditions of Early North India* (2013), and *The Past as Present: Forging Contemporary Identities through History* (2014).

RAJAN GURUKKAl is Sundararajan Visiting Professor at the Centre for Contemporary Studies, Indian Institute of Science, Bengaluru, India. He earned his PhD from Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, India. He was also the Vice Chancellor, Mahatma Gandhi University, Kottayam, Kerala, India. His publications include *The Kerala Temple and the Early Medieval Agrarian System* (1992), *Cultural History of Kerala*, vol. I (1999), and *Social Formations of Early South India* (Oxford University Press, 2010).

Recommended by Prof. (Dr.) V.S. Elizabeth

NATIONAL LAW SCHOOL OF INDIA
UNIVERSITY LIBRARY
NAGARABHAVI, BANGALORE - 560 072.
This book must be retumed by the date stamped below

P.T.O.

Cl.No. 954 THA-III
Author Thapar
Romila
The Historian

954
THA-III

035864

This set of four volumes reflects the scholarship of one of the foremost historians of our time. It is a comprehensive collection of essays and lectures by Romila Thapar, with each focusing on a theme—Historiography, Pre-Mauryan and Mauryan India, Social and Cultural Transactions, and Religion and Society.

Using theoretical frameworks to highlight the implicit evidence in her sources, Romila Thapar differentiates between that which is certain and what remains uncertain. This has helped her make interpretations that have taken the debate forward.

Thapar investigates the literal and allegorical meanings in ancient texts in an attempt to reveal how they represent past societies and persons. She points to the way in which a text may imply something other than what is directly stated. This provides a glimpse of her attempt at understanding how the past texts look at their own pasts.

The essays in this volume serve as social commentary on early north India. They examine the complex nature of socio-cultural relations and processes evident from sources as varied as epics, myths, genealogies, and hero-stones. As Rajan Gurukkal, who has introduced this volume and has interviewed Thapar, says, 'These essays challenge the frontiers of early Indian historiography and break new ground in conceptualization.'

OXFORD
UNIVERSITY PRESS

www.oup.com

ISBN 0-19-946775-7
9 780199 467754

Back cover sketch: Aniruddha De